THE FRIAR SAINTS SERIES

Editors for the Franciscan Lives
The Very Rev. Fr. OSMUND, O.F.M., Provincial, and C. M. ANTONY

Editors for the Dominican Lives
The Rev. Fr. BEDE JARRETT, O.P., and C. M. ANTONY

ST. BONAVENTURE

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ST. BONAVENTURE.

From an engraving by Eitel after the painting by Cavazzola (P. Morando)

SAINT BONAVENTURE

THE SERAPHIC DOCTOR
MINISTER-GENERAL OF THE FRANCISCAN ORDER
CARDINAL BISHOP OF ALBANO

BY THE REV.
FR. LAURENCE COSTELLOE, O.F.M.

WITH SIX ILLUSTRATIONS

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PREFATORY NOTICE.

THE first two volumes of the "Friar Saints" Series now published will be followed at short intervals by four more "Lives," two at a time, Dominican and Franciscan together. Should the first six "Lives" prove successful they will be followed by a second set of six. The order of publication will probably be as follows :—

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The "Friar Saints" Series, which has received the warm approval of the authorities of both Orders in England, Ireland, and America, is earnestly recommended to Tertiaries, and to the Catholic public generally.

The Master-General of the Dominicans at Rome, sending his blessing to the writers and readers of the "Friar Saints" Series, says: "The Lives should teach their readers not only to know the Saints, but also to imitate them".

The Minister-General of the Franciscans, Fr. Denis Schuler, sends his blessing and best wishes for the success of the "Lives of the Friar Saints".

F. OSMUND, O.F.M., PROVINCIAL,
F. BEDE JARRETT, O.P.,
C. M. ANTONY,

Editors.

FOREWORD.

THE life of Saint Bonaventure, the "Seraphic Doctor," is now appropriately presented to the public as the first of the Franciscan lives in this "Series of the Lives of the Friar Saints". Till the days of this "Second Founder of the Franciscan Order," the simplicity of our Holy Father St. Francis had been the salient feature of his institute: no successful effort had hitherto been made to organize the growing Order unto the full measure of its efficiency. Speaking generally, everything so far had been left to individual initiative, and the keynote of those early days is struck in the liberty enjoyed by the individual—a liberty which, though charming to contemplate and of irresistible appeal to a democratic age, is yet incompatible with the distinctive work a corporate body must perforce fulfil if its deeds are to justify its exist-

ence. To effect this purpose a certain amount of that rigid uniformity attendant on all organization was imperatively demanded.

Under the influence of St. Bonaventure this was successfully accomplished. Among the many elements that entered into this process of development we must, perhaps, assign the most conspicuous place to the systematic pursuit of learning which our Saint engrafted on St. Francis' ideal of contemplation and zeal, and which, under the guidance of God's Providence, has been destined to render the Franciscan Order an effective force in dealing with the world's most vital problems. Together with this pursuit of learning came the introduction into the Order of a uniform exterior observance; an observance inculcated and fostered by a systematized code of Constitutions and ordinances which remain substantially the same to-day as when first framed centuries ago.

The life of St. Bonaventure may, accordingly, be considered as the ideal to which the modern Franciscan tends: an ideal in which the simplicity of St. Francis is blended with a thorough grasp of the latest developments in scientific thought: in which personal holiness, because cognizant of self-weakness, is large-

hearted and generous in its sympathy with others: in which the multitudinous details of active and administrative life are raised by a strong interior spirit from what might be a fertile source of distraction into a means of closer union with God.

We have now but to add that the following pages on the life-work of St. Bonaventure, written by the late Fr. Laurence Costelloe, O.F.M., are based on the critical life of the Seraphic Doctor contained in the tenth volume of his works (Quaracchi, 1902). At the request of his superiors he intended to revise and publish his work, but sudden death frustrated his design. This revision has now been undertaken by the Rev. Fr. Leo, O.F.M., who has verified the sources, and introduced such changes as were demanded by the prescribed length of this work.

OSMUND COONEY, O.F.M.,
Provincial.

THE FRIARY, FOREST GATE, LONDON,
Feast of the Annunciation, 1911.

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CHAPTER I.

CHILDHOOD AND YOUTH.

It is refreshing to turn from the depressing materialism of the present time to the inspiring faith of the Middle Ages. The change of outlook is invigorating; it has on the soul the effect which a bracing atmosphere has on the body.

The temper of modern times tends to enfeeble our sense of the supernatural. If we would maintain undiminished our spiritual vigour we must withdraw occasionally from its influence and endeavour to dwell for a time in a more healthy religious atmosphere.

This is why I would take my readers back to the thirteenth century—a period glowing with the faith and fervour of the great spiritual revival effected by St. Francis and St. Dominic. I do not intend to treat of that epoch and its characteristics generally; a field so wide could be but very imperfectly surveyed in these pages. I think we shall receive a clearer and more forcible impression of it if we study it as exemplified in the life of one

of those great saints who personified its spirit in themselves. Of course we should find this in all its fulness in St. Francis, but there are so many works treating of the Seraphic Patriarch that only the discovery of some entirely new aspect of his marvellous life would fully justify another. I do not pretend to this; but I consider that we shall achieve our purpose by studying the life of one of Francis' most remarkable sons, viz. the Seraphic Doctor, St. Bonaventure. This great man presents to us an aspect of the Franciscan spirit which those who study the life of St. Francis in all its literal simplicity may fail to discover. For actual pre-eminence in learning and the establishment of means to secure its continuance amongst his followers do not at first sight appear to receive either approval or support from the life of St. Francis. Learning and the honour naturally attaching to it seem to savour of temporal greatness, but direct and absolute opposition to this was the dominant note in Francis' life. He would have his brethren called "Friars Minor," or lesser brethren, and he directly says in his Rule: "Let those who are unlearned not seek to learn". Yet we find St. Bonaventure—deeply imbued with the spirit of St. Francis, and seventh General of his Order—bearing the high dignity of Master of Theology and Arts, and as Cardinal of the Holy Roman Church, occupying one of the most exalted stations in Christendom.

In the course of our survey we shall discover the secret of this apparent anomaly. No one appears to have been more fully alive to its existence than St. Bonaventure himself, as frequent references to it in his writings testify. It is from these references and the explanations they contain that we receive the truest insight into the development of the spirit of learning in the Franciscan Order.

St. Bonaventure was born in the year 1221, at Balneumregis, the modern Bagnorea, in the vicinity of Viterbo. His parents were John and Ritella Fidanza. Their station in life is a matter of conjecture. One historian asserts that John Fidanza was descended from the noble house of Fidanza of Castello, and was a Master of Medicine. We are in no way concerned to prove the nobility of Bonaventure's ancestors. His personal eminence in learning and holiness, with which alone we are concerned, was not the inheritance of rank or station. It may have been otherwise with those instincts of piety and virtue that developed in his soul even as a child. To the fostering care of a devout mother the presence of these may justly be attributed. Experience teaches us that the mother's influence, if it be good, and well and prudently directed, is paramount in the life of the child for all time, determining it for good according to the degree of its own excellence.

Of the early years of our Saint only one striking episode is preserved to us, which is thus recorded

by himself in his introduction[1] to the Life of St. Francis. Lamenting his "inability and unworthiness to relate that life most worthy of all imitation," he feels himself bound, "through the love he is compelled to feel for our Holy Father," to undertake the task which the General Chapter so urgently laid on him. "For," he continues, "through his invocation and merits I was snatched from the jaws of death while yet a child—as I remember with fresh and vivid memory. Were I then to refrain from publishing his praises I should fear to incur the crime of ingratitude." In his smaller life of St. Francis,[2] he again refers to this incident, but adds a further detail. "God does not cease," are his words, "to glorify his servant by numberless miracles wrought in various parts of the world, as I myself can vouch from personal experience. For as I lay dangerously ill as a child, I was snatched from the very jaws of death and restored to healthy life owing to a vow my mother made to the Blessed Father Francis."

Around this incident, thus simply recorded, the legend has grown up that our Saint owes his name to a prophecy uttered by St. Francis on the occasion of his cure. We are told that the sick child was presented to Francis by the anxious mother who with tears besought his intercession. The Saint took the child in his arms and, raising his eyes to

[1] "Legenda Major Sti Francisci," Prolog. No. 3.

[2] "Legenda Minor Sti Francisci," Lectio Octava.

Heaven, prayed earnestly for its restoration. Assured that his petition was granted, he restored it to its mother, and regarding it with prophetic gaze, exclaimed, *O buona ventura*—"Oh good luck!" We cannot vouch for the authenticity of this narrative, but it has the support of a fairly reliable tradition. One thing is certain, that prior to the time of our Saint, the name Bonaventure was in existence. From his father he appears to have received the name of John, and in many MSS. he is frequently referred to under that name. He has also been referred to as Eustachius, Jacobus, Eutychius. This must be attributed partly to errors in transcription and partly to the Saint's intercourse with Greek theologians who adapted the Greek form of his name. Bonaventure, however, is the name by which he was commonly known to his contemporaries, and it is the one under which his fame has come down to us.

As has been said, the story of his boyhood is lost to us. We might sketch a fanciful portrait of it, to harmonize with the holiness and learning of his subsequent life, but conjecture is not history. In the absence of recorded facts we are condemned to silence. The biographers to whom we might look for enlightenment on this matter are silent. They seem so intent on proclaiming the world-wide fame of his mature years and recording his great achievements on behalf of the Church and the Franciscan Order, that they have overlooked the

comparatively obscure period of his youth. This was no uncommon fault with the chroniclers of that period. We have another very striking example of it in the insoluble obscurity in which the biographers of the renowned Duns Scotus have left the question of his birthplace and nationality. We do not know where Bonaventure acquired the rudiments of learning; we do not know with anything like certainty the name of the convent in which he made his novitiate. Our certain knowledge of him dates from his appearance in Paris in the year 1242.

Certain of our Saint's words, however, lift the veil, though somewhat slightly, from the shadows that obscure his early years. Writing in after years against a detractor of the Rule he professed, Bonaventure thus gave expression[1] to the trend of his earlier thoughts: "Do not take offence," he wrote, "that in the beginning, the brethren were simple and unlettered. This ought rather to raise the Order in your esteem. For my part I acknowledge as before God that what chiefly drew me to love the life-work of Blessed Francis was that it bore so close a resemblance to the beginning and growth of the Church. As the Church began with simple fishermen and afterwards numbered renowned and skilled doctors, so too did it happen in the Order of the Blessed Francis. In this way God makes it

[1] "Epistola de tribus Quæstionibus," Tom. VIII, p. 336. No. 13.

evident that the Institute was founded not by the prudence of men but by Christ."

With his mind penetrated with that miracle of his early years we can readily conceive how the spiritual awakening started by the Franciscan movement seized on Bonaventure's thoughts. His mother's vow, harmonizing with his youthful desires, would clothe those impulses with the glamour of the virtue of religion. It is certain that our Saint entered the Franciscan Order as a youth; all the ancient chroniclers testify to this. The precise year of his reception, however, is a debatable question. To the learned editors of our Saint's works [1] it seems almost established that he entered the Order in the year 1238. We know authoritatively that it was in the novitiate of the Roman Province St. Bonaventure received the habit, but the name of the friary has not come down to us. The three years following on his profession in 1239 were spent in the study of philosophy at some quiet house of the Roman Province which tradition tells us was Orvieto. Wherever these three years were passed, our Saint's lectors could not but notice his opening powers, and plans were formed for developing those conspicuous abilities which would reflect, they were sure—and time has ratified their conviction—such glory on the Order. Accordingly in 1242 Bonaventure proceeded to the University of Paris.

[1] "Opera Omnia" (Quaracchi, 1902), Tom. X, pp. 42, 43, 44.

CHAPTER II.

SANCTITY AND LEARNING.

When St. Bonaventure arrived at Paris he was twenty-one years of age and had spent three years in the Order. In those days Paris was the great centre of philosophical and theological learning. Universities devoted to the study of those branches did not exist in Italy until fully a century later, hence all who were desirous of acquiring proficiency in these sciences had to journey to France. The Franciscans founded a monastery at Paris about the year 1216.[1] Only about twenty years later were they thoroughly established there. By the munificent benefactions of St. Louis and his saintly mother, Blanche of Castille, they succeeded in erecting a large church and monastery. The latter was to be the chief house of studies not only for France but for all the Provinces of the Order.

A very detailed account of this convent, and of the nature of the studies, and the manner in which they were pursued, is given by Wadding.[2] There was accommodation for 240 Friars, including professors. The school comprised four departments, one for Grammar, Rhetoric and Logic respectively, and one for Theology and Philosophy. The study

[1] "Wadding," Tom. I, Anno 1219. No. 43.
[2] Tom. II, Anno 1234. Nos. 17-36.

rooms and public lecture halls were the largest and best appointed in the city. They were four in number, each measuring seventy-six feet by forty-six. Unlike similar structures of that period, they were built without pillars and were lighted by eleven large windows. At the end of the Theological hall stood a large rostrum composed of two stages or compartments, from the higher of which the Licentiates and Doctors lectured, whilst the lower served for the Bachelors who under the guidance of the former were sometimes allowed to lecture on Physics and Theology. Each morning there were two lectures on Theology, and in the evening two on Scripture. An hour was devoted every day to the discussion by students and professors of the matter treated of in class. Once a week the public defence of some thesis was undertaken. Like the other students of the University the Friars, when necessary, attended lectures outside their own convent. They underwent examinations and took their degrees publicly. As early as the year 1234, we find special ordinations, issuing from the Minister-General of the Order, determining the number of Friars to be sent to Paris from each Province and regulating the manner in which they were to be presented for degrees. Two Fathers from each Province were generally chosen every year for the degree of Doctor. Having successfully complied with all the tests, public and private, imposed by the University, they were for-

mally proclaimed Doctors in the court of the Archbishop of Paris.

To this world-famous centre of theological learning Bonaventure came in 1242, and for three years followed the ordinary University course which was based mainly on Scriptural Exegesis and on the Exposition of the "Book of Sentences". This oft-referred-to work was a compendium of Dogmatic Theology written about the year 1140 by Peter Lombard. It takes its name from the fact that its doctrine is based upon the "Sentences," i.e. the views or opinions of the Fathers of the Church. Divided into four books, it treats respectively of God and the Trinity; of Creation and the Fall; of the Incarnation; and finally of the Sacramental system. For years it constituted the recognized text-book among scholastic theologians whose labours and lectures upon it are embodied in the immense commentaries bequeathed to us.

At this time the great Franciscan doctor Alexander of Hales occupied the chair of Theology at Paris. Born in Gloucestershire, he derived his name from the monastery in that county at which he was educated. Before his entrance into the Order (1222) he had studied at Paris and was already one of the most renowned professors of that University. He was subsequently styled and is now known as "The Irrefragable Doctor," and "The Monarch of Theologians". There is, perhaps, no greater blessing for a rich and growing

mind than to come early and to remain long under the influence of another mind which, while equally rich, is yet more highly educated and matured with a wider experience than itself. During the three years our Saint was following Alexander through his expositions of Scripture and of "The Sentences of Lombard"—studying his points of view, his workable materials and his constructive methods—the magnificence of his master's genius allured him as with magnetic force; and Bonaventure's emulous efforts to be worthy of his master's care could not but lead him to undreamt of heights of knowledge.

We catch a glimpse of their mutually cordial attitude from a few of their casual expressions. Whereas St. Bonaventure refers to Alexander as "his master" and "his father" and in his choice of a decision is drawn almost unconsciously to "that Father's" opinion, Alexander anticipated in the case of his pupil the verdict of Sixtus IV. That part of the Bull of canonization serves as so apt a commentary on Alexander's words that we quote it in full. "Bonaventure was great in learning, but not less great in humility and holiness. The innocence and dove-like simplicity of his life were such that the renowned Doctor Alexander of Hales used to say of him, 'It seemed as though Adam had never sinned in him'."

In 1245, when twenty-four years of age, Bonaventure received his degree of Bachelor. Following

this came the necessary letters from the Minister-General, our Saint then fulfilling the office of Professor to his own brethren and at times teaching publicly in the University under the guidance of a fully-qualified lector. That same year Alexander died, and the chair thus vacated was filled by John of La Rochelle. Three years later, however, he resigned, and then at the command of the Minister-General, John of Parma, and at the earnest entreaty of the authorities of the University, Bonaventure succeeded to the post. This took place in 1248. Bonaventure was now a Licentiate, i.e. he was "licensed" or allowed to lecture publicly in view of his qualifications being recognized. It was no doubt a trial to his humility to follow so eminent a light as the "Monarch of Theologians," but fortunately personal distrust yielded to obedience. One of the ancient chroniclers, referring to this event, shows us Bonaventure as his contemporaries saw him. "This Brother Bonaventure," writes Blessed Francis of Fabriano, "was a most eloquent man, wonderful in his understanding of the Sacred Page and of the whole of Theology. He was also an excellent lecturer, a very fine preacher and in his presence every tongue was hushed."

Bonaventure occupied this post from 1245 to 1257, and during that time acquired those stores of knowledge which he at first communicated to his pupils in the form of lectures, and then, with afterthoughts, corrections and additions bequeathed to

the world in the four folio volumes known as "The Commentary on the Sentences of the Lombard". His love of God growing in proportion, Bonaventure ultimately reached those sublime heights of contemplation which earned for him the title of Seraphic Doctor. To the Saint his youthful age seemed unequal to the fulfilment of such a task. His superiors, however, in laying on him the burden of obedience, felt assured that he would more than justify the wisdom of their appointment. And indeed so exceptional were the natural and supernatural gifts of this Seraphic Doctor that Sixtus IV. could say of him in his Bull of Canonization: "Such things he uttered on sacred science that the Holy Ghost would seem to have spoken through his mouth." And again, "Enlightened by Him Who is the Light, the Way, the Truth and the Life, in the space of a few years he attained to incredible knowledge".

The timidity with which his humility undertook the work contrasts strangely with the universal appreciation it has received at the hands of others. Thus at the end of the third volume, he writes: "I render thanks to our Lord Jesus Christ, that taking pity on the poverty of my knowledge and ability, He has enabled me to come to the end of this work. I beseech Him to aid me to go forward in my work unto the merit of obedience and the welfare of my brethren—for which two motives alone this task was undertaken." And again in the

Introduction to the second volume, "By the help of God's grace I have ended the Commentary on the first book, and at the instance of the Brethren must needs begin the second. . . . I do not intend to propound new opinions but to reproduce those that are generally admitted. Nor should anyone think that I wish to be the author of a new book; I am sincerely conscious and acknowledge that I am but a poor and faulty compiler."

This is the language of profound humility which is all the more striking in view of posterity's verdict on our Saint, and his writings. Salimbene,[1] a contemporary chronicler, writes as follows of Bonaventure: "He then lectured on the whole Gospel of St. Luke—a beautiful and excellent treatise: and he wrote four books on the Sentences which even to this day remain useful and esteemed. It was then the year 1248 but now the year 1284." Gerson, the learned chancellor of Paris University, is more unstinting in his praise. "Were I to be asked," he writes, "who is the most eminent amongst all the doctors, I should answer, without prejudice, 'Bonaventure'. I know not that Paris ever possessed another such Doctor." And again, "In Theology there is nothing more sublime, more divine, more salutary, nor more sweet than Bonaventure's writings". The following striking testimony of Pope Sixtus V in the Bull *Triumphantis Jerusalem*—conferring on St. Bonaventure the title

[1] "Chronica," p. 129.

of "Doctor"—adumbrates his two salient characteristics as embodied in his title "The Seraphic Doctor". "In his writings," the Pope's words run, "Bonaventure united to the deepest erudition an equal amount of the most ardent piety, so that whilst enlightening his readers, he also moved their hearts, penetrating to the inmost recesses of their souls."

Numberless other proofs might be adduced of the high esteem in which Bonaventure's works have always been held, but these will suffice. As an instance, however, of the widespread popularity they enjoyed it is curious to note that amongst the depredations of his book-borrowing friends which Charles Lamb, the genial author of the "Essays of Elia," deplores,[1] is the abstraction of his "Opera Bonaventuræ". "That foul gap in the bottom of the shelf facing you, like a great eye-tooth knocked out, with the huge Switzer-like tomes on each side (like the Guildhall giants in their reformed posture, guardant of nothing) once held the tallest of my folios, 'Opera Bonaventuræ,' choice and massy divinity, to which its two supporters (school divinity also, but of a lesser calibre—Bellarmine and Holy Thomas), showed but as dwarfs—itself an Ascapart!"

The fundamental characteristic underlying the fervour and the love of the Seraphic Doctor's writings, is his ever-conscious realization of God's

[1] "The Two Races of Men".

presence. This with Bonaventure was not a feature of passing or variable devotion; it rested upon the basis of philosophical conviction, and of vivid childlike faith. To Bonaventure, in his system of thought as in his spiritual ideals, God is constantly and emphatically the Alpha and Omega, the Beginning and the End, the Source and Centre, by Whom and in Whom and from Whom all things are. Throughout the whole of his writings God is ever the central idea round which all converges. As in his writings so in his life. In this continual and abiding presence of God—the very spirit as it is also the ideal of monastic solitude—his soul, his entire being, grew and blossomed, turning ever to the light and warmth of the Divine Beauty as the sunflower to the sun.

Not only was this the source of his light and unction, it was also the guiding principle of his spiritual and mental life. Hence sprang that moderation of tone—the calm balancing of evidence as in the presence of an impartial Judge. Hence that humility—his simultaneous knowledge of God and himself—to which all arrogance and pretension are so alien. Hence, too, that directness of aim—fastening on the essence of facts, rather than on their accidental surroundings—which ensured at once a love of truth for truth's sake, and limpid, simple utterance as its worthiest channel. In God's sight all men are brothers, so it became our Saint to communicate his lights in the spirit of deference

and self-effacement. Hence, finally, came that unflinching loyalty to His Lord's revelations which implies aversion to curious searchings, singular views, and novel innovations—which, when not the result, are often the occasion of heretical betrayal of the trust committed to our care.

CHAPTER III.

THE MENDICANT ORDERS ASSAILED.

From 1248 to 1255 Bonaventure taught publicly at Paris with great distinction. About this time, however, owing to a violent outburst of opposition to the Mendicant Friars on the part of the secular professors of the University, he was compelled to suspend his lectures. This occurrence affords us a valuable insight into the condition of the Friars at that epoch. It shows us how they were regarded by their friends and by their enemies, and it enables us to form a better estimate of their merits. Their lives and actions were openly and unsparingly impeached. They were put on their trial before the entire Church, and their very existence depended on the issue. Every weak spot in their constitution was laid bare—their faults and failings were proclaimed with emphasis. Their adversaries were men of repute and learning—doctors and professors of the most renowned Theological School of Christendom. Thoroughly versed in all the

wiles of controversy, and apparently animated by religious zeal, they were unscrupulous in their methods, and frequently had recourse to slander and falsehood. The conflict was thorough and decisive. Issuing triumphant from such an ordeal the Mendicant Orders proved once and for all that their position in the Church of Christ is impregnable. So important an incident ought not to be lightly dismissed.

Various causes tended to create a spirit of opposition to the Friars. Jealousy at their success, and a spirit of worldliness to which their lives was a constant reproach, appear to be the chief. The Friars succeeded in attracting universal admiration. Their professors were the most brilliant in the University; their lecture halls the best appointed; their audience the most enthusiastic. They enjoyed the favour of the Pope and of the King, both of whom conferred many privileges on them. They possessed neither money nor lands, yet they stood in need of nothing. They had renounced the pomp and glory of the world, but the world ran eagerly after them. Their preaching attracted immense crowds and their confessionals were thronged. They were the least by profession but the greatest by repute. To some extent they supplanted the secular clergy. The bishops and the Faithful found themselves less dependent upon the latter, for the Friars formed willing and efficient substitutes for them in almost every capacity. The spirit of

the secular clergy of Paris at that period was not such as to enable them to view this new development without hostility. An indevout and worldly spirit reigned amongst them, and they were profoundly indifferent to the highest maxims of the Gospel. This we learn from the strain in which Pope Alexander[1] writes to the Bishop of Paris in the year 1256: "Concerning certain masters and scholars of Paris it is notorious that they glory not in being considered the children of peace but rather in being the authors of scandal; they glory not in being called the sons of God, but of Satan. So great is their disorder that they hinder piety not only in themselves but also in others, and impede the salvation of souls which we so greatly desire."

The smouldering elements of discord were fanned into flame in the year 1254, and the secular and regular professors came to an open rupture. The matter arose thus. A noisy brawl occurred amongst the students. The civil guard intervened; a riot ensued, and one student was killed and several were wounded. Such encounters were not infrequent, and they resulted in creating a bad spirit between the magistrates and the authorities of the University. The latter sought to exempt the students from civil jurisdiction, whilst the former, in the interests of public order, insisted on subjecting them to it. The occurrence just recorded brought matters to a

[1] Cf. "Wadding," Tom. IV, Anno 1256. No. 23.

climax. The University demanded the punishment of the civil guard, the magistrates refused compliance. Thereupon the entire staff of secular professors suspended their lectures and withdrew from the city. The Regulars kept their halls open and continued to teach. This gave great offence to the secular professors, and when the difference between them and the municipal authorities was eventually settled, and they had once more resumed their duties, they did not forget it. Determined to prevent its recurrence, they framed a statute binding the Regulars to act in accordance with the majority of the professors. To this they refused to submit, and in consequence they were forced to abandon their Chairs. They appealed to the Pope who eventually reinstated them and revoked the obnoxious statute.

Meantime the agitation against them was vigorously carried on. Its leading spirit was William of St. Amour, a doctor and professor of the University. Prominently associated with him were Odo of Douay, Christian, Canon of Beauvais, John Belin and John of Gectville, an Englishman and Rector of the University—all men of consequence and possessing considerable influence. William of St. Amour was a type of the worldly-wise Christian, and he represented a large and powerful element at Paris. He was a man of undoubted ability and learning, but wanting in moderation and soundness of judgment. Possibly he may have meant well,

but blinded by prejudice he did not see the injustice of his conduct, nor the falseness of his views. He aimed at expelling the Regulars from the University and eventually obtaining their suppression. He wrote and preached against them. His book on the "Perils of the Last Times," his sermon on the "Publican and the Pharisee," his pamphlet on the "Robust Beggar," were violent onslaughts upon them. They were based on false principles and teemed with slander and invective. William endeavoured to show that the mendicant form of life was unchristian and pernicious, and that those who professed it were outside the pale of salvation. Mendicancy, preaching, hearing confessions, and teaching publicly were the capital sins that consigned the Friars to reprobation.

He speaks thus of mendicancy: "There is a great danger attendant upon begging. Those who live by it become flatterers, liars, detractors, thieves and unjust. To leave all things for Christ and to follow Christ begging is not an act of perfection. Regulars may not beg even though the Church permits it. Whoever begs whilst in good health sins grievously. Hence, whoever places himself in the necessity of doing so is not within the pale of salvation."

To preach and hear confessions was also on the part of the Friars wrong and unjustifiable: "Although authorized by the Pope or the bishop they may not preach unless invited by the parish priest.

They may not live by the Gospel. Those who preach to the Faithful who have their own pastors, viz. bishops and priests, are not true but false Apostles. It is greatly to be feared that such as these will grievously injure the Church unless they are expelled from it. Confession to Mendicants, approved of by the Pope, does not satisfy the Easter Precept."

To become professors and teach publicly was another grievous transgression: "The office of master is an honour, and Religious should not aspire to honours. Seeing that they belong to a state of perfection, they should observe the Gospel Counsels, one of which is: 'Wish not to be called master'. Aspiring to the dignity of master they transgress this counsel and thereby sin publicly, scandalize the Faithful and deserve to be shunned."

Such were the opinions proclaimed by William, and the effect they produced was deplorable. A species of universal boycott was instituted against the Mendicants. Students were dissuaded from attending their lectures; they were excluded from the University, and the people were exhorted to refuse them alms. Matters reached such a crisis that the Dominicans were way-laid and beaten in the streets so that they were afraid to leave their convent. The opposition to the latter seems to have been much keener than to the Franciscans, and it would appear that they were forced to quit the University earlier. It is certain that St. Bona-

venture lectured publicly on the question in dispute. His treatise on "Evangelical Perfection" is a reply to the utterances of William of St. Amour. It is recorded that the latter, hearing of the Saint's action, sent one of his adherents to report the substance of his lectures—to which he wrote a rejoinder. As we intend to treat in detail of Bonaventure's apology for the Franciscan Order, we shall make no further reference to it here. Lest, however, a false impression concerning the merits of this controversy should remain on the minds of my readers, I consider it expedient to point out, in the next chapter, how it was regarded by the Holy See.

CHAPTER IV.

THE MENDICANTS VINDICATED.

THE commotion caused by William of St. Amour's book extended to the Court, and the pious King Louis, desirous of removing the scandal, formally referred the matter to the Holy See. Two doctors of the Paris University were appointed to take the book to the Papal Court and present it for examination to the Pope. This project having become public, William and his chief adherents determined to defend their views and set out for Anagni. The Pope received the King's envoys and regarded the matter as of very grave importance. He appointed a Commission of Cardinals carefully to examine the

book and to judge between the Mendicants and their opponents.

A public discussion was instituted at which were present representatives of both parties. On the side of the Mendicants were the Ministers General of the Dominican and Franciscan Orders—Humbert of Rome and John of Parma—Albert the Great, St. Thomas of Aquin, O.P., Bertrand of Bajona, O.F.M., and, according to some authors, St. Bonaventure. We cannot say with certainty who the defenders of St. Amour's book were. It is doubtful if he himself had arrived at Anagni before the work was condemned. Albert the Great and St. Thomas powerfully vindicated the cause of the Mendicants. The treatise composed by the latter, "*Contra impugnantes Dei cultum*," is a masterly defence of the principles attacked by St. Amour. St. Bonaventure's work on "Evangelical Perfection" is no less solid and convincing. It was written in connection with this dispute and was very probably submitted to the Commission. This may account for the assertion put forward by some writers that Bonaventure was present at Anagni and took part in the discussion—an assertion which more accurate investigation has almost entirely discredited. On the arrival of William and his followers a strenuous effort was made to avert the impending condemnation, and even to effect its revocation, but to no purpose.

After an examination extending over several

weeks the Cardinals gave their decision. It was an unconditional condemnation of Amour's book, which was ordered to be publicly burned both at the Papal Court and at the University of Paris. The sentence was proclaimed by the Pope in the Bull *Romanus Pontifex* issued on 5 October, 1256. Referring to William and his supporters the Pontiff says :—[1]

"They heaped calumny on the Brethren and placed a stumbling-block in the way of the chosen children of the Church. Nay, more, in the excess of their bitterness they burst forth into malicious invectives, and composed a certain book which is most pernicious and detestable—a book not only not according to reason but utterly opposed to it; not true but false; not edifying but scandalous; not enlightening but misleading. This book having been brought to Our knowledge, We entrusted it for examination to certain Cardinals that they might discover and diligently consider all that it contained. Which having carefully and with due deliberation performed, they report to Us that the said book contains many things false and pernicious concerning the Pope and the bishops, also concerning those who, overcoming the world and its works, live by alms in strict poverty. It also assails those who, burning with zeal for souls and devoted to sacred science, greatly further the spiritual welfare of God's Church. It condemns the state of life of

[1] Cf. Wadding, Tom. IV, Anno 1256. No. 31.

poor Religious, such as the Friars Preachers and Friars Minor, who by the power of the Spirit, having abandoned earthly things, aspire with all their force to the heavenly reward. The book is a veritable hot-bed of scandal and disorder, and greatly injures souls by withdrawing them from devotion, the giving of alms, and entrance into holy Religion. This same book which bears the title 'Perils of the Last Times,' with the advice of Our Brethren and by Our Apostolic authority We reject and condemn for ever as wicked, iniquitous and execrable, and containing bad, false and nefarious sentiments. We strictly command all its possessors to burn it and procure its destruction within eight days from the issue of this Our condemnation. Against those who despise Our command We pronounce sentence of excommunication."

This condemnation does not appear to have produced the desired effect. The agitation against the Friars still continued. It was found necessary to counteract the pernicious influence of Amour's teaching by some more direct and forcible method, and to this end the Pope addressed [1] the following letter 19 October, 1256, to King Louis and the French bishops :—

"Not without much bitterness of heart and trouble of mind, We have learnt that certain Masters and Doctors and others, 'sharpening their tongues like swords,' and 'bearing the poison of

[1] Ibid. No. 33.

asps in their lips,' for the defamation, vexation and destruction of the innocent, have wickedly poured it out in slander and injuries on our beloved sons, the Brothers of the Order of Preachers and Friars Minor. By lecturing and preaching and otherwise, they have dared to say that they were not in the way of salvation; that their Mendicancy was neither salutary or meritorious, since health permitting, and other reasonable hindrances ceasing, they should work with their hands and not depend for necessary help upon others. Furthermore, they have asserted that they may not preach nor hear confessions, even when authorized by the Pope or the bishop, lest they encroach upon the rights of the parish priests, and many other things false and reprehensible have they uttered against them. Now these same Orders for some time back have been approved by the Holy See as holy, renowned and illustrious. And some of the Brothers thereof, having reached their heavenly country, are inscribed in the catalogue of the Saints and shine like suns in the Church of God, whilst by their Brethren the light of holy doctrine is shed over the whole world, the Gospel of Christ is earnestly and efficaciously preached, and right and sound counsel and salutary example prevail. Furthermore, as the aforesaid Brothers are assiduously and continually engaged in the study of the Holy Scriptures and the Word of God, in saying the Divine Office and in prayer, they are by no means indulging in idleness, but exercising

themselves in the best and highest pursuit, for wisdom is the noblest attainment; nor do they do more who devote themselves to external labours, than those who are engaged in the study of divine things. Hence, the Lord, whilst Martha was busy working and ministering, commended principally the docility and devout attention of Mary to His word. From this it appears clearly that the Brothers are not bound to work with their hands. Nay more, were they to neglect spiritual things for manual labour they would be abandoning, not without detriment to their souls, the greater for the lesser, the necessary for the unnecessary. Moreover, these Brothers, having left all things for God, when they beg the bare necessaries of life, imitate the poor Christ and practise Evangelical Perfection. Hence, it clearly follows that they are in the way of salvation, and by the observance of their Rule merit eternal life. Furthermore, by commission or command of the Roman Pontiff or the Bishop of the Dioceses they may lawfully preach and hear confessions. Therefore, We strictly command all the Doctors or Masters who have dared to deny these things, publicly to retract and renounce the same and hold and proclaim the contrary. Should they refuse to do this they must be proceeded against by suspension, excommunication, and the perpetual deprivation of their benefices. Lay people transgressing in this matter are to be seriously reprimanded."

Some of the prominent adherents of William of St. Amour accepted the Papal condemnation in a submissive spirit and publicly retracted their false opinions, and promised on oath never more to maintain them. Amongst these were Christian of Beauvais and Odo of Douay. William himself was not so tractable. He had recourse to evasions and explanations, and endeavoured to show that his views were not really condemned. He continued to foster a spirit of hostility to the Mendicants amongst his partisans at Paris, and eventually he drew upon himself the sentence of perpetual banishment from France. Under pain of excommunication and forfeiture of all his benefices he was forbidden ever to return, and under like penalties he was prohibited to preach or teach. His friends at Paris did all in their power to procure his recall, but they were strenuously opposed by the Mendicants. Thus, the ill-feeling between the two parties was maintained, and it was only by the renewed intervention of the Pope and the employment by him of stringent measures against the secular professors that order was established and the Mendicants treated with justice and tolerance.

After ten years' exile Pope Clement permitted William to return to Paris. He had not abandoned his old opinions, and it needed a severe reprimand on the part of the Pope accompanied by a threat of further banishment to restrain him from again assailing the Mendicants. After his death, some

years later, the agitation against the Friars gradually died out, and they regained the esteem and confidence in which they had formerly been held.

CHAPTER V.

MINISTER-GENERAL.

BONAVENTURE was elected Minister-General of the Franciscan Order in the year 1257. At that time the Order was passing through a serious crisis in its history. Internal difficulties had arisen concerning the observance of certain points of the Rule. Some of the Brethren advocated the rigorous and literal acceptation of all its prescriptions: others contended for a more mild and liberal interpretation. Amongst the advocates of both views were extremists who sought to introduce excessive rigour or undue laxity: the main body on either side were men of moderation. These eventually prevailed and preserved to the world the Order of St. Francis in the only feasible way in which it could continue to exist. Those who aimed at too great laxity, which would deprive the Order of its distinctive features, and those who would accentuate those features until they became impracticable or grotesque, were gradually eliminated.

The process by which this was effected was slow

and fraught with the gravest danger to the Order. It could be accomplished successfully only under the prudent guidance of a wise Superior. Bonaventure was eminently such a man. His predecessor, John of Parma, could not cope with the difficulties of the situation. He was possessed of great ability, and his heroic sanctity has raised him to our altars, but he seems to have lacked that enlightened judgment and liberal sympathy which smooths away opposition and brings conflicting views into harmony. Where the motive of subjection is the love of God and the desire of perfection, the exercise of authority must be tempered with infinite tact and kindness. The inflexible rigour of the stern Superior is so wholly opposed to the spirit of Christ, to whom the Religious ever looks, that instead of securing obedience it excites resentment, and if it does not culminate in apostasy begets an abiding spirit of bitterness and discontent. With one section of the Order the latter appears to have been the effect of John of Parma's rule. Some writers[1] affirm that he was released from his office at the express wish of the Sovereign Pontiff.

In view of his failure, Bonaventure's success is all the more conspicuous. In order to appreciate this success at its proper value we must consider briefly the difficulties that troubled the peace of the Order. What precisely they were it is somewhat

[1] Cf. Wadding, Tom. IV, Anno 1256. Nos. 2 and 3.

difficult to determine. They must be traced back to the influence of Brother Elias. For a period, even during the lifetime of St. Francis, this man seems to have exerted an influence in the Order second only to that of the Saint himself. He was truly a remarkable man and the story of his life is strange and sad.

An intimate friend and devoted disciple of St. Francis, he had been deemed worthy by the latter to rule the Order during his absence in Palestine. Though full of admiration for the Seraphic Father and professing intense reverence for his saintly life and Christ-like spirit, he appears never to have quite accepted his views concerning the absolute poverty and rigorous mode of life he wished to impose upon his followers. He seems to have considered that such austerity would render impossible its uniform and continued observance by any considerable body of men. Whilst a few chosen souls such as Francis himself could live up to it, the heterogeneous multitude who were flocking to the Order could not prudently be expected to do so. Hence he advocated certain mitigations in the matter of poverty. What these were we cannot definitely affirm. His views and actions are presented to us from a thoroughly hostile standpoint. His biographers, generally speaking, were his avowed opponents, and although they were men of remarkable virtue and integrity of life, we can hardly believe that they were free from the in-

fluence of bias and party spirit. In their eyes Elias was a wrecker—the enemy of their Order and the destroyer of its high ideals. Hence their accounts of him must be cautiously received and allowance made for the exaggerations of pious zeal.

We are told that Elias sought to introduce the use of money; that in visiting the Order he rode on horseback; that he wore a somewhat elegant habit; that there was a general tendency to relaxation discernible in his life. No doubt he was guilty of these things, but in view of subsequent developments it is not easy to determine how far they were incompatible with the spirit of the Rule. We are told that he was a man of remarkable foresight and a born ruler. Perhaps he wished to establish from the beginning what the natural evolution of circumstances was eventually to achieve. He may have foreseen that certain prescriptions theoretically feasible for all, and practically so for a few, would actually become impracticable for the general body of the Order. Thus by the very force of circumstances it soon became necessary for the Friars to use money at least indirectly. Be the country where they reside Catholic or Protestant, friendly or hostile, there are instances where to live means to use money. Nor does the Minister-General of the Order now visit the Order on foot, nor is the Franciscan habit of the present day such perhaps as would meet with entire approval from those

early rigorists. But there has been no substantial defection from the primitive spirit of the Rule; these modifications have arisen as the necessary result of changed conditions. Nor is this to be wondered at. Christianity itself began even as the Franciscan Order. Like to that Order it increased and developed. In course of time, whilst theoretically maintaining its highest ideals, it practically ceased to make them the guiding principles of its general conduct. Thus, community of goods, prevalent in the time of the Apostles, gradually ceased. Again, the successors of the Apostles who were counselled to possess neither gold nor silver nor scrip eventually appear as temporal rulers; and the Saviour's doctrine of submission to evil gave way, when circumstances demanded, to armed resistance. The highest ideals of Christianity were practically abandoned by the multitude, and maintained only by the few. Indeed, it is very questionable from an historical point of view, whether the absolute perfection of the Gospel outlined in the counsels of our Lord could ever be more than the ideal of the very few—something to which one or other favoured soul might actually attain but which was never intended to be the practical aim of society in general. This must be borne in mind when studying the history of the Franciscan movement, which was an attempt to restore literally and rigidly the highest Christian ideals. Broadly speaking it succeeded and continues to succeed. The Order

can never revert to the attitude of the world towards the Evangelical Counsels although time and circumstances may modify its interpretation of them.

The Friars have absolute community of goods; they are bound to the poor use of the necessities of life. Whilst some interpret their obligations in this and all other matters most rigidly, and emulate St. Francis in every respect, others, although fully observing the substance of the Rule, quite justifiably regard its precepts in a milder light. They are none the less true Franciscans. Of late years there has arisen a class of writers whom we may describe as the academic critics of the Rule and Spirit of St. Francis. Regarding the Franciscan movement from an extrinsic and speculative point of view, they are particularly attracted by its more rigorous features. But they look upon them as things of the past and discuss them with melancholy interest. They seem to think that the Franciscan ideal has vanished from the world, and that the modern Friar is scarcely a representative of his prototype. Whoever is not a Francis, or a Giles, or a Juniper, is not worthy of consideration. To the professor of the Rule of St. Francis there is something particularly irritating in the attitude of these writers. He knows that he is observing the Rule in its simple literalness—that there is no precept of it which he does not fulfil; yet because he does not realize the romantic ideal conceived by these shallow critics he

receives at most only tolerant pity or condescending regard.

But to return to Elias and the dissensions his influence created in the Order. He seems to have gained over to his side the majority of the Provincial Ministers, so that he was twice elected General. On both occasions, strange to say, his administration ended in his deposition. Still, many of his supporters adhered to him and he was proposed a third time for the office of General. On this occasion Elias was ignominiously rejected by the Pope, who also deprived him of some privileges he enjoyed. Thereupon, overcome by pride and indignation, he set the Pontiff at defiance, and sought the protection of his declared enemy, the Emperor Frederic. He thus absolutely abandoned the Order, but there remained behind him some who advocated his views. We are even told that the succeeding General, Crescentius, was one of his followers and pursued a similar policy. Certain it is the dissensions increased during his time of office.

We have seen how John of Parma, his successor, failed to grapple with the difficulties of the situation. Wadding [1] represents him as stern and uncompromising in his views, and as equally rigorous in forcing those views on others. When at length he saw that many Religious, who would conscientiously carry out a less lofty ideal, were being simply forced

[1] Tom. IV, Anno 1256. No. 2.

Photo. Alinari *Pinturicchio, pinx.*

THE CORONATION OF OUR LADY.

From the picture in the Vatican, Rome.

(St. Bonaventure is the figure to the left of the group of Saints).

by reason of his well-meant yet none the less stringent insistence to a revolt against the very principle of obedience, John summoned a General Chapter at Rome and resigned his office. According to certain writers,[1] Alexander IV., the Cardinals and the Brethren assembled sought to persuade him to continue in office. John, however, was resolute in his refusal. For a whole day the business of the Chapter was suspended; still the Minister-General stood firm. Then the Vocals[2] "in view of his determined attitude said to him: 'Father, you who have invited the whole Order and know the merits of all the Brethren, tell us who is the best suited to succeed you?' There and then John replied 'Brother Bonaventure of Bagnorea; no one is more worthy than he'. Thereupon he was unanimously elected."

CHAPTER VI.

DISCIPLINE AND OBSERVANCE.

BONAVENTURE was teaching at Paris when he was elected Minister-General. However reluctant he may have been to accept the responsibility, he did not think of shirking it. He was a young man—only thirty-seven years of age—and fully conscious

[1] Author of the Chronicles of the XXIV Generals. "Analecta Franciscana," Tom. III, pp. 286, 287. Also Bernard of Besse. Ibid. p. 698.

[2] Salimbene, p. 137.

of his deficiencies and of the arduous task before him. That he undertook it calmly and confidently shows that he possessed the virtue of fortitude in no slight degree. He was well aware of the dissensions within the Order and of the relaxation of discipline that prevailed amongst some of the Brethren. To remedy these was his first concern.

Shortly after his election he wrote [1] a remarkable letter to the Provincials of the Order. He began by acknowledging his unfitness for the high and important office to which he had been called, alleging the weakness of his body, the imperfection of his mind, the inexperience of his life and the repugnance of his will. Still, he did not dare to resist the voice of obedience, and to make up for his shortcomings he counts upon the worthy co-operation of the Provincial Ministers. He then refers to the irregularities existing in the Order which had begun to endanger its success and bring it into disrepute amongst the Faithful. Remembering that the Order was then in existence barely fifty years it is interesting to consider what these were. Ten causes of relaxation are enumerated by Bonaventure :—

1. Too great multiplication of temporal affairs for which money is eagerly sought, carelessly received, and recklessly handled.

2. The idleness of some of the Brethren.

3. Useless travelling from place to place, to the

[1] Cf. "Opera Omnia" (Quaracchi), Tom. VIII, p. 468.

scandal rather than to the edification of the people.

4. Importunate begging, whereby the Brethren are feared as highwaymen.

5. The construction of costly and pretentious buildings, which disturbs the peace of the Order and exposes the Brethren to the attacks of their enemies.

6. The increase of dangerous friendships from which arose suspicions, calumnies and scandals.

7. The imprudent bestowal of offices on those who were incapable of discharging them.

8. The eager reception of legacies and officious interference with obsequies, to the great offence of the secular clergy.

9. Frequent and expensive change of residence, to the disturbance of the locality and the prejudice of poverty.

10. Finally, expensive living, by which the Brethren became a burden to the people.

Whilst many, he remarks, are blameless in these matters, still, the evil redounds upon all, and must not be overlooked nor tolerated on any account. He then points out the remedy and insists on its application. He concludes his letter with the following remarkable utterance: "Should I learn from the Visitors whom I desire to pay special attention to these matters, that my directions have been obeyed, I shall give thanks to God and to you; but if it should be otherwise (which God

forbid), you may rest assured that my conscience will not permit me to allow the matter to pass unnoticed. Although it is not my intention to forge new chains for you, yet must I in compliance with the dictates of conscience aim at the extirpation of abuses."

From this we can gather the nature of the policy adopted by the Saint. It was clearly one of firmness and moderation. Perceiving that they arose from minor causes, such as the particular views of individuals, he makes no reference to the internal dissensions of the Order. He aimed at uniformity on general lines, convinced that if this were accomplished lesser differences would gradually disappear, or, at least, lose their power of seriously disturbing the peace of the Order. The Rule was to be observed; no abuse was to be tolerated. But whilst strongly condemning the excesses of those who aimed at relaxation, he was not less determined in restraining the zeal of those who sought excessive rigour. This provoked the displeasure of the latter. In view of the Saint's words quoted above and of the Constitutions enforced by him at the Chapter of Narbonne, their failure to agree with his policy demonstrates how extreme were the views they entertained. And it is apparent that those who regard such men as representing the true spirit of the Order are seriously mistaken. Excessive rigour is as foreign to the latter as excessive mildness. True virtue avoids

both extremes, and Bonaventure's wisdom enabled him to aim at the golden mean.

In 1260 our Saint celebrated the General Chapter of Narbonne. Here the various Constitutions hitherto established in the Order were revised and promulgated anew. These Constitutions differ but slightly from those that prevail at the present day. The vicissitudes of six hundred years have necessitated certain additions and modifications, but they have remained substantially the same and constitute an enduring monument to the wisdom and foresight of Bonaventure. Wadding[1] says of them: "The Statutes of Bonaventure are weighty —the outcome of mature deliberation and discussion—and they are redolent of a truly religious spirit. In them is enjoined whatever is of primary importance and necessity. They ought never to be abrogated, but whatever modifications changes of time and place may call for should be added to them, for of all they are the most excellent." The Annalist is unsparing in his condemnation of the attempts made at various times to change them. "One cannot but be displeased," he writes, deploring a state of things which now happily no longer exists, "at the facility with which some make laws at General Chapters. It would seem as though one could not consider himself a renowned ruler unless he posed as a legislator and drew up new laws to mark his term of office. Hence, we have daily

[1] Tom. IV, Anno 1260. No. 11.

fresh and bewildering laws, and such a multitude of crude and undigested statutes, that the poor subject does not know to-day what he may have to observe to-morrow."

The Constitutions of Narbonne were distributed under twelve heads and formed an enlightened and prudent interpretation of the twelve chapters of the Rule. Writing[1] to the Provincials six years after their promulgation, Bonaventure attributes the existence of certain irregularities to their non-observance. His appeal to the prelates of the Order on this occasion reveals the burning zeal of the Saint: "Lest the 'blood of souls'—not only of those committed to our care but of all who esteem the religious life—should be 'demanded at our hands' . . . . I adjure you by the shedding of Christ's Most Precious Blood and by the Wounds of His Passion, which appeared with unmistakable clearness on the body of our Holy Father, St. Francis, that like prudent and faithful servants of Christ you apply yourselves diligently to the rooting out of pestiferous abuses, and that you show yourselves attentive to discipline and examples of religious fervour. In the first place, excite the Brethren to a love of prayer, and at the same time entreat and even compel them to observe the Rule faithfully—'fearing the countenance of none; rooting up and pulling down; wasting and destroying'; committing the disaffected and insubordinate to prison,

[1] "Opera Omnia," Tom. VIII, p. 470.

or expelling them from the Order, as the laws of justice and piety may demand, lest, whilst with cruel mercy you spare a diseased member, the corruption extend itself to the entire body."

No reasonable man reading these words of Bonaventure could doubt his earnestness in procuring regular observance, or think of accusing him of remissness or laxity. It only shows how extreme were the views of a certain section of the Order when we find them attempting to do so. Peter John Olivi, the leader of the rigorists, replying to some who sought to justify their relaxations by saying that Bonaventure and others lived very laxly, says:[1] "Hitherto, it was the custom to adduce worthy men as examples of perfection; now, alas! they are brought forward to justify relaxation and inobservance. . . . Let me say what I think of Bonaventure. He was a most excellent and pious man, and in his teaching he insisted on the perfection of poverty. But he was of a somewhat delicate constitution and therefore, perhaps, inclined to be somewhat indulgent to himself, as I have often heard him humbly admit. For he was not greater than the Apostle who said 'We all offend in many things'. Still, the prevailing relaxation affected him so much that I heard him declare at the Chapter of Paris that from the day he was made General there never was a moment when he was not prepared to be ground to dust so that the Order might retain the purity and strict-

[1] Cf. "Opera Omnia," Tom. X, p. 50.

ness intended by St. Francis and his companions, and attain the end they aimed at. On this account the holy man may be excused somewhat, though not entirely. He was not one of those who sought to justify relaxation or assail the purity of the Rule, making such conduct the rule of their lives. If he was in any way found wanting he regarded the matter with grief and sorrow." In conclusion, Peter John Olivi makes the astounding assertion that he does not consider Bonaventure's attitude to have been mortally sinful. "I do not think," he says, "that such men are to be judged guilty of mortal sin unless, taking everything into account, this kind of excess should in their case be considered enormous."

Assuredly, Bonaventure is deserving of our sympathy. On the one hand we find him grief-stricken at the relaxations in the Order and doing everything in his power to remedy them; on the other hand we find him assailed as conniving at them and in some degree responsible for them. The rigorists could not distinguish between what was strictly commanded and what was a matter of perfection. This latter could be recommended but not enforced, and because our Saint's wisdom would not allow him to attempt its enforcement they accused him of laxity.

It has been said in a previous chapter that the observance of St. Francis was something peculiar to the Saint himself and could not become a matter

of obligation for all. Strict observance admits of many degrees of perfection. This Bonaventure perceived, and whilst sincerely desiring that which was most perfect he felt that it was unattainable. Hence, he chose a middle course and steadfastly adhered to it. By this means unity and peace were on the whole well maintained in the Order during his Generalship. Still the elements of discord were not destroyed. They were only held in check by the powerful personality of the Saint. They continued to operate slowly and imperceptibly, giving rise in time to the fanatical sect known as the Fraticelli. We are justified in thinking that the maintenance of the body of the Order in its substantial purity was due to the wise administration of Bonaventure. A more rigorous General or a less observant one might have led the Order to some extreme which would have wrought its ruin. From this point of view our Saint deserves the title which has widely been bestowed upon him of Second Founder of the Franciscan Order.

CHAPTER VII.

INCIDENTS OF ADMINISTRATION.

Bonaventure's life, for the ensuing years, is a record of fast-succeeding events centring mainly round the work of his personal sanctification and his exertions for the welfare of the Order. On

23 October, 1257, our Saint received the degree of Doctor of Theology. The differences between the University and the Mendicant Friars had gradually passed away and a better spirit prevailed. Still, the favour bestowed upon our Saint is to be attributed principally to the letter of the Sovereign Pontiff commanding the University to extend all its privileges to the Friars Thomas of Aquin and Bonaventure.

During the Pentecost of 1258[1] we find him assisting at the foundation of a hospital at Pisa. In the official record of this institution we read how "Friar Bonaventure, the Minister-General of the whole Order of Friars Minor, was, at the command of Pope Alexander, present at the afore-mentioned foundation; at the command of the same Holy Father he made each and every benefactor of the hospital a sharer in the prayers said and good works performed by all the members of the Order".

Bonaventure celebrated five General Chapters—that of Narbonne in 1260; of Pisa in 1263; of Paris in 1266; of Assisi in 1269; of Lyons in 1274. These Chapters are the most convincing proofs of his indefatigable activity. In each of them, apart from the general efforts made to further regular observance, some special ordination of a remarkable kind was enacted. Thus, in the Chapter of Pisa, the suffrages for the dead were regulated, and amongst the Masses and prayers appointed to

[1] Cf. "Opera Omnia," Tom. X, p. 52.

be said for deceased benefactors we find the Solemn Requiem for the parents of the Brethren. In the Chapter of Assisi in 1269 the recital of the Angelus and the celebration of a Mass every Saturday in honour of our Lady were prescribed. In the Chapter of Paris, by the tact and prudence of Bonaventure, a somewhat serious difference which had arisen between the Franciscans and Dominicans was amicably settled. The disagreement arose concerning the respective spheres of the Inquisitors of the two Orders. The office of Inquisitor, already held by the Dominicans, was assigned to the Franciscans by Innocent IV. in the year 1254. The settlement of this dispute became the occasion of the consolidation of that spirit of fraternity and friendship that has ever since existed between the two Orders, and which, as is commonly known, originated in the reciprocal brotherly love of Francis and Dominic.

It is asserted that it was at the Chapter of Narbonne that the Franciscan habit received its present shape. Up to that time it appears to have been more or less identical with the dress worn by the Umbrian shepherds—a simple tunic with a girdle, and a hood to protect the head. It is not, however, easy to determine the precise nature of the alteration effected.

There is one incident of Bonaventure's administration which calls for special attention; an incident which has deeply influenced the historical estimate formed of him by certain writers. This is his action

with regard to John of Parma—his predecessor in the Generalship of the Order. The upholders of the rigorous observance of the Rule pretend to see in it evidence of harshness, injustice, nay, even of duplicity. This assumption, needless to say, is utterly devoid of solid foundation.

Owing to the peculiar temperament of the times and some untoward circumstances, John of Parma fell under the suspicion of heresy, and at the request of the Sovereign Pontiff it became necessary for Bonaventure to investigate the charge. The biographers of our Saint are at variance in determining the year in which this trial was held. Wadding[1] and the editors of our Saint's works[2] place it under the year 1257, but as Father Livarius Oliger, O.F.M., points out in a review[3] of Father Lemmens' recent "Life of St. Bonaventure," the investigation is known to have been proceeded with before Cardinal John Cajetan, who at the time was the Protector of the Order. Cardinal Cajetan, however, was nominated Protector of the Order "shortly after the assumption of Pope Urban," who was elected Pope, 29 August, 1261. This is a typical instance of the chronological difficulties and uncertainties which are associated with the life of our Saint.

[1] Tom. IV, Anno 1256. Nos. 5 and 6.

[2] Tom. X, p. 48. No. 4.

[3] "Archivium Franciscanum Historicum," Annus III, Fasc. II, p. 346.

How a man so remarkable for learning and virtue as the ex-General should have provoked such an accusation demands some further explanation.

In the first place, it must be borne in mind that this was the period when the Inquisition reigned in all the fervent zeal of its recent institution. Whatever savoured in the least of heterodoxy, either in theory or in practice, aroused its vigilance. It was closely investigated and its author, no matter what admirable qualities he might otherwise display, was regarded with suspicion and distrust. This attitude of the ecclesiastical authorities was fully justified by the prevalence of false mysticism, under the guise of which the Waldenses and Albigenses were just then putting forth the most pernicious and subversive doctrines.

True mysticism is the perfection of Christianity. Its essence is union with God. The more perfectly it accomplishes this union, the more thoroughly it achieves its end. It is the noblest and most exalted aspect of religion, but, at the same time, it is attended by very grave dangers. The mystic sees only God and his own soul—or rather he has no direct consciousness of anything but God alone. He converses with God and is guided directly by him—anything else is to a large extent ignored.

The danger of this state is apparent. The mystic is at the mercy of his imagination and of a thousand natural influences which he is liable to mis-

take for the voice of God. And when he thinks that God speaks, no matter to what folly or extravagance the imagined voice may urge him, nor how clearly it may oppose the dictates of obedience, he considers himself bound to obey it; for is he not sure, even as St. Peter, that he "must obey God rather than man!" Unless he possess a sound judgment and a thorough grasp of Catholic doctrine, or, failing these, unless he be humbly submissive to the teaching of some competent spiritual guide, he needs must go astray. This danger, Francis, who was a mystic in the truest sense of the word, avoided perfectly, but as much cannot be said of some of his earlier followers. For notwithstanding Pontifical utterances and the enactments of General Chapters, they persisted in maintaining that their particular views concerning the observance of the Rule were the only permissible ones. A mild form of fanaticism seems to have laid hold of them. Their immoderate regard for the Rule and its observance led them to extremes. They were convinced that it was inspired by our Lord Himself and they attributed to it an authority equal to that of the Gospels. Contending that it was perfectly clear and intelligible, they denied that any authority on earth had the power to explain or interpret it. In these ideas they were strengthened by the writings of Joachim, Abbot of Flora.

This remarkable man flourished about the latter

portion of the twelfth century. He was deeply imbued with the spirit of mysticism, and its dangers were only too fully realized in his case. In treating of the Blessed Trinity he erred seriously, and his doctrine was condemned by the Fourth Lateran Council. He seems to have considered himself inspired, and he gave utterance to a long series of prophecies concerning the Church's future. He declaimed vehemently against all ranks of the clergy—denouncing Popes, Cardinals and Bishops for their indifference and corruption, and predicting for them the most terrible punishments. Turning to the relations between mankind and God he proceeded to divide Revelation into three epochs: that of the Father, or the Old Testament; that of the Son, or the New Testament; and that of the Holy Ghost—a period which was to come and which would be much more perfect than the preceding two. It was to be characterized by the most powerful and universal sway of Divine Love, a clear vision of the eternal truths, and the rise of a contemplative monachism.

Notwithstanding these peculiar tenets, Joachim was a man of rare virtue and piety and he died in full union with the Church. He was regarded by many as a saint and a prophet, and his writings were thought to be divinely inspired. John of Parma, indeed, held him in high esteem, but some of the Brethren with whom he was intimately associated, and to some extent identified, exceeded

the bounds of all moderation in their ardent advocacy of him. Inflamed as they were with intense religious fervour and deeply penetrated with a spirit of penance and self-sacrifice, the teaching of Joachim appealed most forcibly to them. His denunciation of the worldliness of the age, his contempt for all things temporal, his love of contemplation, and above all, his vivid prophecy about the institution of a new Religious Order in which the light and love of God would govern all, filled them with unbounded admiration. They pretended to see in Joachim the precursor of St. Francis and the realization of his prophecy in the Order he established. Amongst the most extreme partisans of Joachim were two intimate friends of John of Parma—Friars Gerard and Leonard. Upon these principally rested the suspicion of heresy. They were tried, found guilty, and condemned to perpetual confinement.

The trial of Blessed John of Parma then came on. He was accused of leaning to the views of Abbot Joachim and of wavering in his belief in the Trinity. The ex-General, perhaps, inclined somewhat to certain of the Abbot's views; in any case the suspicion that such was the fact had subjected him to many and great persecutions. The public character of John, the immense influence he wielded over a great part of the Order, rendered it imperative that the case should be thoroughly investigated and a definite issue come to at a public trial. Were

John guilty of heresy—the stern measure would be more than justified; were he innocent—his name would gain lustre from the ordeal, and malicious tongues be silenced.

The details of the trial have not come down to us. Wadding[1] merely gives us the result, stating "that iniquity was not found in him". He admits, however, that John was too favourably inclined to the mysticism of Joachim, and that he submissively retracted in the presence of the Cardinal and assembled Fathers. A few details we have, but it is impossible to determine how far they are coloured with partisan prejudice. One historian states that the suavity of John's answers so wrought on his opponents that they openly declared that as a heretic he should be sentenced to perpetual imprisonment. To be stigmatized as a heretic was more than John could bear in patience. Drawing himself to his full height and looking up to heaven he professed clearly and with ardent zeal his adherence to all the articles contained in the Apostles' Creed. "He assumed the rôle of an innocent follower of Christ," writes Angelo Clarenus, "and averred that he did believe as he ever had believed on that question as on all other questions what the Church holds and the Saints teach." This further incensed his accusers; and they determined to imprison for life their late Minister-General. That he was finally

[1] Tom. IV, Anno 1256. No. 6.

acquitted must be attributed to the intervention of Cardinal Otto Boni—then one of the most influential members of the Sacred College and afterwards Pope Adrian V. He dispatched two letters, one to the Cardinal President, the other to Bonaventure, in which, among other things, he wrote: "It is with the deepest regret I have learned of the process instituted against John of Parma, and that party strife has led to his arraignment on a charge of heresy. For many years—even before my elevation to the Cardinalate—I have had personal warrant both as to the orthodoxy of his doctrine and the holiness of his life; nor have I yet found anyone more loyal to his creed or more faithful to his ideals. So firmly am I persuaded of this, that I have no hesitation in saying that his faith is my faith. Let me then most earnestly beseech you that this trial be not conducted recklessly nor with partisan bias. He and I are one: injustice towards him will redound on me; the verdict you pass on him you pass also on me; his sentence, too, is mine—and my sincerest wish is to be fully associated with him."

These letters produced the desired effect. John left the Assembly fully acquitted, and availing himself of the choice of residence that Bonaventure courteously extended to him, withdrew to the friary at Greccio. There he spent many years in the practice of every virtue and finally expired in the odour of sanctity.

Angelo Clarenus[1] condemns the part played by Bonaventure in this inquiry. "Bonaventure," he states, "on the testimony of John of Parma himself, acted wrongly in no slight degree; for whilst discussing the question in dispute privately with John of Parma in his cell he agreed with him, affirming that he thought as he did, but publicly in presence of the Brethren he showed that he held the contrary." And again he says: "Brother John enters; as one suspect of heresy he is forced to take an oath; a wise man is cross-examined by those less wise, an aged man by youths; one full of the Holy Ghost is searched into by the indevout, and by those who follow the desires of their heart. Then the wisdom and holiness of Bonaventure were obscured and vanished, and his mildness by the agitation of his soul was changed into violent anger. To such an extent was he carried away that he exclaimed: 'If it were not for the honour of the Order I should have him publicly punished as a heretic'."

To preside at this trial was one of the painful duties which his position placed upon Bonaventure. At the instance of the Brethren and the Sovereign Pontiff he was bound to undertake it. John of Parma had acquired a great reputation for holiness, and his indefatigable labours on behalf of the Order and of the Church had made his name famous throughout Europe. Furthermore, he was a per-

[1] Cf. "Opera Omnia," Tom. X, p. 49.

sonal friend of Bonaventure, for was it not he who recommended him for the office of General! In the face of these considerations it is incredible that he should have been guilty of injustice or duplicity towards him. It is much easier to believe that Angelo Clarenus, carried away by party spirit, gave ready credence to the exaggerated reports circulated by the admirers of John of Parma, who were bitterly, though unreasonably, indignant that Bonaventure should have listened to the accusation of heresy and lent his authority to the investigation that followed.

CHAPTER VIII.

ST. FRANCIS' BIOGRAPHER.

At the General Chapter of Narbonne, in 1260, Bonaventure was requested to write the life of St. Francis. Owing to the circumstances that surround it, considerable importance attaches to this incident. There already existed several legends of the Saint. Thomas of Celano had written one in 1229. His work received the approval of Gregory IX., who had officially recommended it to the Brethren. In the year 1246, at the request of the Minister-General, Crescentius, appeared the "Legend of the Three Companions," written by Brothers Angelo, Rufinus and Leo. A second life was written by Thomas of Celano in 1247 or 1248.

A few years ago the well-known French writer,

M. Paul Sabatier, edited a work[1] which he contended was anterior to any of these. He maintained it was nothing less than a complete life of St. Francis written by Brother Leo in the year 1227—within a year of the Saint's death. This remarkable work had been already well known, but according to M. Sabatier its authorship and the date of its *compilation* had been misconceived. Although the learned writer supports his contention with weighty arguments he cannot be said to have rendered it certain. He is enamoured of the tone and spirit of the book. If it be an original work and the production of Brother Leo, it is, to the modern critic, an ideal biography. It reveals simply and forcibly the human side of Francis. The personal traits of the Saint are brought prominently before us in all their unique individuality. We have the real, living man —not the stereotyped example of every virtue which the earlier hagiographers delighted in. Still it must be admitted that the book is characterized by the prejudices of its author. Certain sayings and doings of Francis which appealed to his prepossessions are insisted upon with evident emphasis. Indeed, to such an extent is this apparent that the work cannot be regarded as purely historical. It is largely polemical and would seem to have been designed to refute the ideas of the moderate party concerning certain points of observance.

Before quitting this subject it may be said that

[1] "The Mirror of Perfection," by Brother Leo, Paris, 1898.

the ardour and enthusiasm with which the greatest literary critics of the day, Catholic and non-Catholic, devote themselves to the investigation of the sources of St. Francis' biography, is one of the most remarkable phenomena which our times witness. We hear of the formation of societies composed of the ablest scholars of Europe for the study of early documents relating to Francis and his Order. How the words of Christ are herein verified: "He that humbleth himself shall be exalted!" I doubt if there is a personality in history, exclusive of the Divine Founder of Christianity, whose words and actions are so closely studied in a spirit of loving admiration as are those of St. Francis.

To return to Bonaventure and the task imposed upon him by the General Chapter, the importance of the latter becomes apparent when we reflect that as far as the Order could effect it, the legend he was about to compose was to be the sole record of the life of Francis which should come down to posterity. This purpose evidently underlay the demand for its composition, for when the work was finished and submitted to the General Chapter of Pisa three years later it was officially approved of and all the other legends were formally proscribed. More stringent measures still for the suppression of the older legends were adopted at the Chapter of Paris in 1266. Therein was framed the following Constitution: [1] "The General Chapter commands

[1] "Rinaldi," p. 11. Cf. "Opera Omnia," Tom. X, p. 58.

under obedience that all the legends of St. Francis hitherto composed be destroyed, and that where they can be found outside the Order the Brethren shall strive to remove them, for the legend composed by the General was written according as he had it from the mouth of those who, as it were, had been always with Blessed Francis and knew everything with certainty, and those things which are proven are therein diligently set down."

On the part of modern historiographers this ordination has excited much criticism, and even the warmest admirers and staunchest advocates of the Order must confess their inability to account for it adequately. At first sight it appears to be a very high-handed and obscurantist procedure, little in keeping with the ingenuous simplicity of the Franciscan spirit. It looks like an attempt to put out the light—to abolish the true ideal and substitute a counterfeit in its stead. But in reality it was nothing of the sort. At the present day it is impossible to determine the precise motives that actuated the authors of that statute, but no one who is even slightly acquainted with the condition of the Order at the period can fail to conjecture what most likely was the prevailing influence.

The Chapter aimed at introducing peace and harmony amongst the Brethren and producing uniformity of thought and action in their common life. We have seen that these most desirable elements were wanting—that there were dissensions

and differences concerning the nature of the observance to be pursued. The appeal of the contending parties was ever to the words and actions of St. Francis, which, according to their respective views, they strained and exaggerated and, unconsciously perhaps, even falsified. We cannot but conclude that such a state of affairs affected very prejudicially the biographers of the Saint and tended to depreciate the historical value of their labours. For these, too, took sides, and, as it is easy to see, they made the Lives they wrote the vehicle of their particular ideas. Thus Thomas of Celano favours Brother Elias and the moderate observance, whilst the "Three Companions," and (if M. Sabatier's contention be correct), the "Mirror of Perfection" by Brother Leo, constitute a species of manifesto against the latter, and an appeal for a literal and rigorous observance.

Now it is evident that whilst such a condition of things was tolerated, unity and peace could never be established. As long as these old legends, redolent of party spirit and biassed views, remained, legislation making for harmony would be of no avail. This the Chapter clearly perceived, and hence its statute. We may say of it finally that although it was a drastic measure the circumstances more than justified it. And we must not forget that it was adopted only after Bonaventure's work had been examined and approved.

Of this work it is now time to give some account.

Owing to the important place in history this new "life" was to hold, and the manifold distractions of public duties among which it was to be written, we may accept in strict and literal sincerity our Saint's expressions of reluctance to undertake it. "Feeling myself unworthy," he writes,[1] "to relate that life most worthy of all imitation, I should in no wise have attempted it, had not the devout desires of the Brethren and the unanimous importunity of the Chapter moved me thereunto, and had not that love compelled me which I am bound to feel for our holy Father. . . . This, indeed, was my chief reason for undertaking this work; to wit, that since I owe to him under God the life of my body and soul, and have learned the holiness of his life through personal experience of his power with God, it behoved me in return to collect, as best I could, his words and deeds—fragments, as it were, partly overlooked and partly scattered—that they be not utterly lost with the death of those who lived and conversed with the Blessed Servant of God."

During the year 1261, St. Bonaventure was in Italy collecting the materials for his work. "The better to come by first-hand information of this life," he tells[2] us, "I visited the scenes of the birth, life and death of the Blessed Francis, and held studious converse on these things with all who had enjoyed his intimacy, and with such especially as

[1] "Legend of St. Francis," Prologue, § 3.
[2] "Ibid." § 4.

had fuller knowledge of his holiness and were his chief disciples. To all of these all credence is due alike for their tried virtue as for their perfect knowledge of the truth." We cannot say definitely who these "chief disciples" were. To have mentioned them by name would have frustrated the purpose for which the life was undertaken. We presume, however, that our Saint was chiefly indebted to Brothers Leo, Illuminatus, and Giles.

When these researches were completed, Bonaventure returned to Paris to work up into an authentic record of St. Francis' life all the materials —oral and written—he had come by during his sojourn in Italy. Every incident of any moment in St. Francis' life is faithfully recorded. The graces bestowed upon him, the labours he undertook, the sufferings he bore, the virtues he practised, the miracles he worked: all are graphically and sympathetically described. The following episode gives us an insight into the fervour of soul with which this task was undertaken. On one occasion, as our Saint was engaged on his work, his intimate friend St. Thomas Aquinas came to visit him. Gently opening the door of his cell, the saintly Dominican saw Bonaventure seated at his table, pen in hand, and so engrossed in contemplation that he was lost to exterior things. Deeply moved, St. Thomas withdrew whispering to his companion "Come! let us leave a Saint to write the life of a Saint".

ST. BONAVENTURE IN ECSTASY WHILE WRITING THE LIFE OF ST. FRANCIS IS VISITED BY ST. THOMAS AQUINAS

From a fresco by Giacomelli in the Franciscan Church at Cimiez.

In his undertaking Bonaventure had before him an ideal. He wished to present Francis as the chosen servant of God, raised up to be the founder and head of a great Religious Order. Accordingly, his attention is fixed on the supernatural rather than on the natural element in Francis, and he deals more with those aspects of his life and character that bring him within practical reach of his spiritual children than with those that lift him up into a sphere so high that the ordinary soul dares not aspire to it. He distinguishes judiciously between what Francis recommended and practised himself and that which he strictly enjoined upon his Brethren. Here the conciliatory aim of the book is apparent. But he is never betrayed into anything unworthy of an upright biographer. All his facts are unassailable—nothing of importance is suppressed or distorted. In consequence, such a picture of Francis as his spiritual children required is the result. This was the end Bonaventure had in view, and having accomplished it, it matters little if his work forfeits the approval of those modern critics who, in the life of Francis, wish to find a record of the natural rather than the supernatural.

From this "Greater Legend"—as it is called—Bonaventure made an abstract of the salient events, and arranged them under seven headings, each of which contained nine lessons or readings. This was called the "Smaller Legend" and was intended

for the use of the Religious in the Divine Office during the Octave of St. Francis. To this smaller work attaches the same historical accuracy that distinguishes the Greater Legend. In many instances events are described in the same words; other incidents are given in abridged form; the whole work is marked by a more liturgic style, and occasionally fresh details are given.

CHAPTER IX.

INTERIOR SPIRIT.

HITHERTO we have considered principally the outward life of Bonaventure; we now turn to those interior virtues which made him a saint. Notwithstanding his manifold labours and the eminently strenuous life he led he was a perfect master of the interior life. A glance at his writings will show how thoroughly he understood the secrets of Mystic Theology, and how intimately acquainted he was with every aspect of the spiritual life. There is no phase of divine contemplation that he does not seem to have learnt by personal experience. It was this very striking characteristic which gained for him the title of Seraphic Doctor.

He possessed the rare faculty of keeping his mind habitually fixed upon God in the midst of external occupations. To this may be traced the very remarkable attribute of his writings whereby

every subject he treats of is made ultimately to converge Godwards. In his treatises "The Journey of the Mind to God," and "The Reduction of the Arts to Theology," the workings of his soul in this respect are systematized and reduced to scientific order. St. Antoninus notes this feature of Bonaventure's works when he says: "According as Bonaventure made progress in science and the knowledge of the Scriptures, so, too, he grew in the grace of devotion. For whatever he perceived with the intellect he reduced to the form of prayer and worship of God and kept meditating on it continually in his heart."

Besides maintaining at all times this habitual spirit of recollection, our Saint sometimes withdrew entirely from the cares of his office and gave himself exclusively to prayer and recollection. It was on one such occasion, in the seclusion of Mount Alverna, that he conceived the idea of, and actually composed, his "Journey of the Mind to God". He tells us this himself. "On an occasion," he says,[1] "when, after the example of the most Blessed Francis, I, a sinner, sighed for spiritual peace—I who, though unworthy in every respect, am yet his seventh successor in the general ministry of the Brethren—it happened that about the thirty-third year after his death I had withdrawn to Mount Alverna as to a quiet place where I might find

[1] "Opera Omnia," Tom. V, Prologus, p. 295.

the peace I sought. Whilst there, as I reflected on certain elevations of the soul to God, amongst other thoughts there occurred to me the miracle which happened to Blessed Francis in this place, viz. the apparition of the Crucified Seraph. On reflection it instantly seemed to me that the vision signified the lifting up of St. Francis by contemplation and the manner in which it was accomplished."

Unfortunately the biographers of Bonaventure give us no definite insight into his interior spirit. There is no attempt at depicting that inner life which by words and actions, by trains of thought, lines of policy and personal habits, is always revealed to observant contemporaries. We have innumerable vague, though glowing, appreciations of his virtues and character in general. We are told most emphatically that he was a saint, but what kind of a saint we are not informed. In this dearth of particulars we must fall back upon the Saint's writings. We can justly hope to find in them some revelation of his spirit—of those particular ideas that guided and animated him. We can take it for granted that what he taught he practised. The fact that he is a canonized Saint forbids us to think otherwise. Hence, in his numerous descriptions of those interior virtues that should adorn the spiritual life in general, we may see a reflection of those virtues which flourished in his own soul.

There is a small work on the spiritual life written by our Saint in which he depicts the virtues that

make for religious perfection. The book is entitled "The Perfection of Life," and it reveals the spirit of Bonaventure more simply and, for our present purpose, more suitably than his greater works. It was written at the request of the Mother Abbess of some Community of Poor Clares. He refers to this fact in his introduction, and his words breathe such a deep spirit of humility that I cannot refrain from quoting them.

"Wherefore, Reverend Mother, devoted to God and dear to me, you have asked me out of the poverty of my heart to write something whereby, for the time being, you may instruct your soul in the way of devotion. I sincerely confess that rather do I stand in need of such instruction myself, seeing that my life is not adorned with virtue outwardly, nor is it inflamed with devotion inwardly, nor is it enhanced by learning. Nevertheless, moved by your pious wish, even as you have requested I have obeyed. But I ask your blessedness, most holy mother, to regard rather my good will than the result of my efforts; rather the truth of my words than the elegance of my language; and, that, where I fail to give satisfaction, you will excuse and forgive me on account of the lack of time and the pressure of business."

We must remember that these words were uttered by the successor of St. Francis—a man whose reputation for learning and sanctity was world-wide—a man who was consulted by Popes and Princes,

whose merits were soon to raise him to the dignity of the Cardinalate, and upon whose words a few years later the entire Christian Church in General Council assembled would hang with profound admiration. Such an utterance gives us a better insight into Bonaventure's mind and character than pages of indefinite eulogy.

His deep sense of humility sprang from his perfect knowledge of himself. He considered self-knowledge an essential condition to the acquisition of true knowledge of any kind. "He knows nothing aright who knows not himself—who understands not the conditions of his own being. How dangerous it is for a religious soul to be eager to know indifferent things and yet neglect to learn its own deficiencies. That soul is near to ruin which is curious to know extraneous things and prone to judge others yet cares not to know itself." Apart from the sentiment of humility prompting this utterance, what profound wisdom does it not reveal! It establishes a truly golden rule for the guidance of the soul in its search after knowledge, secular or spiritual. It must begin by discovering its own limitations and defects. If it ignores these it cannot form a true estimate of anything. This truth was uttered by our Saint six hundred years ago and it is strange to hear it re-echoed in our own day under totally different circumstances. Men of science, on purely rational grounds, are reverting to the advice given by Bonaventure and are de-

precating the consequences of having hitherto more or less ignored it. Our knowledge of things distinct from ourselves must be modified and verified by our knowledge of the means by which it is acquired.

The intensity of Bonaventure's humility is evidenced by the fact that whereas his biographers seem to have overlooked his other virtues, they have left on record several instances of his humility. The following incident related[1] by Wadding is touching in its simplicity :—

"As Bonaventure was on his way to the General Chapter of Assisi, it happened that a poor spiritually afflicted Brother, named Fulginas, was very desirous of speaking to him but could not do so because of the numbers that surrounded him and engaged his attention. The poor Brother went along in advance of the Saint until he came almost to the walls of Assisi and there awaited him. On his approach he cried out: 'Reverend Father, I should like very much to speak with you for my consolation, and I humbly beseech you not to despise your poor subject though he is beneath notice'. Bonaventure immediately left the company that surrounded him and seating himself on the ground beside the poor Brother, listened with great patience and kindness to his long and tedious recital, and consoled him with much compassion and sympathy. His com-

[1] "Annals," Tom. IV, Anno 1269. No. 5.

panions, impatient at his long absence, expressed their disapproval of his action. But he said: 'I could not do otherwise. I am the minister and servant—the poor Brother my lord and master. I often recall those words of the Rule: 'Let the Ministers receive the Brothers charitably and kindly, and show themselves so familiar towards them that they (*the Brothers*) may speak and act with them like masters with their servants.' I, being the servant, should obey the will of my master and solace the misery of that poor sufferer."

This other anecdote illustrates this virtue of humility quite as forcibly, and has the advantage of being more authentic. Salimbene,[1] a contemporary chronicler, is our authority. "Brother Mark," he wrote, "was my special friend, and to such a degree did he love Brother Bonaventure, that he would frequently burst into tears on recalling (after his father's death) the learning and heavenly graces that had crowned his life. When Brother Bonaventure, the Minister-General, was about to preach to the clergy, this same brother Mark would say to him: 'You are indeed a hireling,' or, 'On former occasions you have preached without knowing precisely what you were talking about. I sincerely hope you are not going to do that now.' Brother Mark acted thus to incite the General to more painstaking efforts. His depreciation was merely

[1] "Chronica," p. 138.

affected and in no way genuine, for Mark reported all the sermons of his master and treasured them greatly. Brother Bonaventure *rejoiced* at his friend's reproaches, and that for five reasons. First, because his was a kindly-hearted and long-suffering character; secondly, because thus he could imitate his blessed Father Francis; thirdly, because it showed how loyally Mark was devoted to him; fourthly, because it afforded him the means of avoiding vainglory; lastly, because it incited him to more careful preparation."

For a mind so powerful, so enlightened, of such perfect equilibrium and sound judgment, humility was the only possible attitude. Pride is the accompaniment of a weak mind or an unsound judgment. It is based upon a notion so palpably false and unworthy as to be inadmissible to a powerful mind. The proud man attributes to himself what he does not possess, or he fails to see that what he does possess is limited and imperfect, and that it is attributable rather to the Author of his being than to himself. Consequently, he does not perceive how senseless it is to glory in it or to despise his neighbour because he lacks it. The more a man knows, however, the humbler he is; because the very greatness of his knowledge only widens the extent of his outlook into the boundless sphere of truth that surrounds him, and which he feels he cannot explore.

In keeping with his spirit of humility our Saint

shunned honours of every kind. He steadfastly refused the Archbishopric of York to which he was appointed by Clement IV., and when that Pope, to secure more effectively his invaluable services for the Church, insisted on making him Cardinal, the envoys who brought him the Cardinal's hat found him washing the dishes of the monastery—nor would he receive it before he had finished his menial task.

CHAPTER X.

LOVE OF GOD.

THE Love of God is the perfection of the interior life. It is this which unites the soul with God, and the more intense it is, the closer is the union and the greater the consequent perfection. It is the crown and consummation of all the virtues. Where it exists we shall, as a matter of consequence, find all the other virtues; and to describe it is implicitly to portray them all. Hence, when we shall have treated of St. Bonaventure's love for God, we shall consider ourselves absolved from the necessity of discussing his other virtues, especially as there is such a scarcity of data to lay under contribution. And even concerning the virtue under consideration, we must be content with reviewing the Saint's teaching upon it.

None realized better than Bonaventure the

The Papal Envoy presenting St. Bonaventure with the Cardinal's hat.

supremacy of charity. "Charity alone," he writes,[1] "renders us pleasing to God. Of all the virtues charity alone makes its possessor wealthy and blessed. If it is absent, in vain are all the other virtues present; if only it be present, all is present—for whoso possesses it possesses the Holy Ghost. If virtue constitute the blessed life—virtue, I should add, is nothing else but the highest love of God." Since charity is so excellent it must be insisted upon beyond all the other virtues. Nor ought any kind of charity to be considered sufficient but that alone by which we love God above all things and our neighbour as ourselves for God's sake. The Saint insists, particularly, on the exclusive nature of the love of God. No interest in creatures and no affection for them should be allowed to interfere with it. "We should love God," he says, "with the whole heart, the whole mind and the whole soul. To love anything not in God and for God is to be wanting in His love." He quotes with approval the remarkable utterance of St. Augustine: "He loveth Thee less, O Lord! who loveth anything along with Thee which he does not love because of Thee". He assigns as the proof of perfect love willingness to lay down one's life for God: "We love God with our whole soul when for the love of Jesus Christ we freely expose ourselves to death

[1] "Opera Omnia," Tom. VIII, "De Perfectione Vitae," Cap. VII, p. 124.

when circumstances demand it. To love God with our whole mind is to be ever mindful of Him, to love Him unceasingly and without forgetfulness or neglect." Such is the substance of Bonaventure's general teachings on charity.

Elsewhere in his treatise, "The Triple Way, or the Fire of Love," he treats of the subject more in detail. He writes, no doubt, from the fulness of his heart and describes the love which dominated his own soul. He distinguishes[1] six stages or degrees of perfect charity.

The first stage is that of *sweetness* when the soul learns to "taste and see how sweet the Lord is".

The second consists in the *yearning* of the soul for God. Having become accustomed to spiritual sweetness, it is filled with a longing which nothing save the perfect possession of that which it loves can satisfy. And as this cannot be attained to here below the soul is continually transported out of itself by ecstatic love, and exclaims in the words of the Psalmist: "As the hart panteth after the fountains of water, so my soul panteth after Thee, O God!" (Ps. XLI. 2).

The third degree is *satiety* which succeeds to the yearning just described. As the soul most vehemently desires God and is lifted up towards Him, everything that tends to hold it down becomes distasteful to it. It can find no pleasure in

[1] "Opera Omnia," Tom. VIII, "De Triplici Via," Cap. II, § 4. p. 10.

anything save its beloved. It is like one whose appetite has been fully appeased: if he attempt to take more food it produces disgust rather than pleasure. Such is the attitude of the soul at this stage towards all earthly things.

The fourth degree is that of spiritual *inebriation* which follows upon the aforesaid satiety. Inebriation consists in this: The soul's love for God is so great that not only does it reject all comfort and pleasure but it delights in suffering. For its consolation it embraces pain, and, as the Apostle did of old, it rejoices in reproaches and scourgings and torments for the love of its beloved.

The fifth degree of perfect charity is *security*. When the soul realizes that it loves God so greatly that it would willingly bear every pain and opprobrium for Him, it conceives such confidence in the divine assistance that it casts out all fear and assures itself that it can never by any means be separated from God. The Apostle had reached this stage when he exclaimed: "Who shall separate me from the love of Christ? I am certain that neither life nor death can separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord."

The sixth and last degree is found in true and perfect *tranquillity*, wherein such peace and quiet reign that the soul appears to lie in peaceful slumber from which there is nothing to disturb it. For what can disturb the soul which no movement of passion assails and no pang of fear disquiets?

In such a soul peace and quiet reign. It has reached the final stage—"His place is in peace". It is impossible to reach such perfect tranquillity save by perfect charity. When this is attained it is very easy for a man to fulfil all that appertains to perfection—whether it be to do or to suffer, to live or to die.

Here indeed we have disclosed to us the dizziest heights of spiritual perfection. No more intimate union with God can we conceive, and yet may we not justly conjecture that it is a faithful portrayal of the personal experience of the Saint himself. The title of *Seraphic* Doctor bestowed upon Bonaventure is an undeniable tribute to his all-absorbing love for God. To the minds of his contemporaries, impregnated with the mysticism and supernatural atmosphere of the Middle Ages, the spirit that breathed in his writings seemed to find its parallel only in the lives of those heavenly beings—the Seraphim—whose existence is depicted as like to a glowing flame of divine love.

Furthermore, in his utterances concerning the workings of the soul in prayer, there is what I consider a very striking revelation of the intensity of Bonaventure's love for God. It is the love of God that vivifies prayer. Prayer is more or less perfect according to the charity that reigns in the soul—it reaches its highest perfection where love is all-pervading. Then we look for raptures and ecstasies such as marked the lives of the greatest saints.

Bonaventure's reflections on prayer imply this most burning love. The following utterances,[1] of which I give the substance, are clearly indicative of this.

"In prayer we must enter with the Beloved into the chamber of the heart and there remain alone with Him. We must forget all external things, and with our whole heart and all our mind and all our affections and desires endeavour to lift our souls up to God. We should endeavour by the ardour of our devotion to mount higher and higher until we enter even into the heavenly court, and there with the eyes of the soul having caught sight of our Beloved, and having tasted how sweet the Lord is, we should rush into His embrace, kissing Him with the lips of tenderest devotion. Thus are we carried out of ourselves, rapt up to Heaven, and as it were, transformed into Christ." The Saint proceeds to explain how the ecstatic state is reached. "It sometimes happens," he says, "that the mind is rapt out of itself when we are so inflamed with heavenly desires that everything earthly becomes distasteful, and the fire of divine love burns beyond measure, so that the soul melts like wax, and is dissolved—ascending up before the throne of God like the fumes of fragrant incense. Again, it sometimes arrives that the soul is so flooded with divine light and overwhelmed by the vision of God's beauty that it is stricken with be-

[1] "Opera Omnia," Tom. VIII, "De Perfectione Vitae," Cap. V, *passim.*

wilderment and dislodged from its bearings. And the deeper it sinks down by self-abasement in the presence of God's beauty, like a streak of lightning, the quicker it is caught up and rapt out of itself. Finally, it occurs that the soul inebriated by the fulness of interior sweetness utterly forgets what it is and what it has been, and is transported into a state of ineffable beatitude and entirely permeated with uncreated love. It is forced to cry out with the Prophet: 'How lovely are Thy tabernacles, O Lord of Hosts. My soul longeth and fainteth for the Courts of the Lord. My heart and my flesh have rejoiced in the living God'" (Ps. LXXXIII.).

Effusions such as these assuredly give us an insight into the extraordinary love that burned in the soul of Bonaventure. From the spiritual tepidity that oppresses us we can only contemplate it with wistful admiration. It proves to us indeed "how wonderful is God in His Saints," and how profoundly and intimately He influences the hearts of His chosen ones and attaches them inseparably to Himself.

It will be fitting to bring this chapter to a close by quoting, as outside testimony, the tribute which Cardinal Wiseman paid[1] to this feature of our Saint's life. "There is another writer upon this inexhaustible subject," said His Eminence, "who more than any other will justify all that I have

[1] Four Lectures on the Offices and Ceremonies of Holy Week. Lecture the Fourth.

said; and, moreover, prove the influence which these festivals of the Passion may exercise upon the habitual feelings of a Christian. I speak of the exquisite meditations of St. Bonaventure upon the life of Christ, a work in which it is difficult what most to admire, the riches of imagination surpassed by no poet, or the tenderness of sentiment, or the variety of adaptation. After having led us through the affecting incidents of Our Saviour's infancy and life, and brought us to the last moving scenes, his steps become slower from the variety of his beautiful but melancholy fancies; he now proceeds, not from year to year, or from month to month, or from day to day, but each hour has its meditations, and every act of the last tragedy affords him matter for pathetic imagination. But when at the conclusion, he comes to propose to us the method of practising his holy contemplations, he so distributes them, that from Monday to Wednesday shall embrace the whole of Our Saviour's life; but from Thursday to Sunday inclusive each day shall be entirely taken up with the mystery which the Church in Holy Week has allotted to it. In this manner did he, with many others, extend throughout the whole year the solemn commemorations of Holy Week, for the promotion of individual devotion and sanctification, even as the Church had done for the public welfare."

CHAPTER XI.

THE ARCHBISHOPRIC OF YORK.

In a previous chapter reference was made to St. Bonaventure's appointment to the Archiepiscopal See of York. It occurred in the year 1265. The See of York had been rendered vacant by the death of Bishop Godfrey de Kinton, or William Ludham —it is not certain which of these two prelates immediately preceded Bonaventure's appointment. The English chroniclers do not refer to our Saint's nomination. The fact may never have come to their knowledge, or their silence may be accounted for by their opposition to foreign appointments. The epoch was one of the most troublous in the history of England. The country was in the throes of the civil war kindled by the revolt of the Earl of Leicester against Henry III. The partial success of the Earl and the captivity of Henry moved Pope Urban to intervene. He despatched Cardinal Guido to England as his legate, but the latter having been threatened with death if he dared to set foot in the country, remained in France. His mission was a failure. After a short delay, and some ineffectual negotiations, he returned to Rome, where shortly afterwards he was raised to the Papacy. It was this Pontiff who appointed Bonaventure to the See of York. He was thoroughly acquainted with the disturbed state of the country

and knew full well the manifold and serious difficulties which would beset the occupant of so important a See. In the Bull of appointment he makes particular reference to this. He beseeches the Saint to attend diligently to the needs of the Church and to work for the peace and welfare of the Kingdom "sorely disturbed and convulsed by the storms of civil strife".

The condition of the Church in England was not more satisfactory than that of the State. It was deprived of the liberty necessary for its genuine welfare. In the year 1261, we hear the Bishops of England, in Council at Lambeth, bewailing the violation of the Church's rights which they asserted were trampled under foot. They enumerated the following abuses which commonly prevailed: the undue interference of the civil power in ecclesiastical matters; the intrusion by secular authority of incumbents into benefices; the unjust and violent seizure of Church property and the goods of the clergy; the pretension of the Crown to the right of patronage in all the more important benefices; finally, the plurality of benefices, and the tenure of benefices by foreign ecclesiastics.

No sooner was the Papal Bull delivered to Bonaventure than he hastened to Perugia, where the Pope was residing, and besought him not to impose upon him so weighty a responsibility. We know not what reasons he adduced, but they must have been very powerful to overcome the Pope's resolu-

tion and turn him from his purpose, for he seems to have chosen Bonaventure after the fullest deliberation and to have been very intent upon his accepting the dignity. It appears that the Chapter of York had chosen its Dean as Archbishop, but the Pope refused to ratify the election, declaring that on the present occasion he reserved to himself the right of appointment. In the Bull which he issued to our Saint,[1] he says:—

"We have long considered this appointment. We have given it our profound and careful attention. Our mind has long been occupied with it in all its bearings. The welfare of a Church so great and honourable, of a daughter so noble and so devoted to the Apostolic See, of a Catholic Kingdom so renowned as England and so dear to the Roman See—the welfare of a Church so amply endowed and enjoying Archiepiscopal dignity fills us with deepest solicitude. It has aroused our anxiety, increased our vigilance and intensified our deliberation. We have studied more intimately, and considered more carefully, all that in this election might make for the greater welfare of the Church, of the Apostolic See, and of the entire Kingdom. We have striven by every means in our power to find a worthy man—one devoted to the Apostolic See and suited to the wants of the aforesaid Church and zealous for the peace and welfare of the Kingdom—a man conspicuous for virtue, renowned for

[1] Cf. Wadding, Anno 1265. No. 14.

learning, remarkable for foresight—a man whom the Lord might love, in whose goodness He might dwell—a man whose good deeds render him worthy of imitation, by whom the Catholic flock as by a shining light may be led to salvation. Seeking for such an one we have fixed our choice on thee—our mind has rested upon thee with entire satisfaction. For we behold in thee religious fervour, candour of life, irreproachable conduct, renowned learning, prudent foresight, serious gravity. We see that thou hast so long and so laudably presided over thine Order, and fulfilled so faithfully the office of Minister-General—exercising it prudently and profitably for the greater honour and welfare of the Order, striving to live innocently under regular observance, showing thyself peaceful and lovable to all. Wherefore, we are fully convinced that we see in thee what we desire for the welfare of the said Church, the Apostolic See and the entire Kingdom. By our Apostolic authority, therefore, we make provision for the aforesaid Church through thee, and constitute thee its Archbishop and Pastor, absolving thee from the office of Minister-General and transferring thee to the said Church, granting thee free licence to go thither. Therefore we exhort, admonish, affectionately entreat, and strictly command thee by virtue of holy obedience not to resist the Divine Will, nor to oppose any obstacle nor delay to our command, but humbly to submit to the call of Heaven and accept the burden placed upon thee by God."

Undoubtedly, only the gravest reasons could have induced Bonaventure to resist so urgent an appeal of the Vicar of Christ. What they were we do not know, and it is useless to enter upon conjectures. The incident shows us the extraordinary esteem in which our Saint was held, and it also gives us an insight into the deep solicitude with which the Popes in the thirteenth century watched over the interests of the Church in England. The action of the Roman Pontiffs in appointing foreign ecclesiastics to English Sees has been severely condemned by Protestant historians, but any one reading the Bull of Bonaventure's appointment must confess that they took the greatest care to select worthy and suitable candidates.

Having succeeded in obtaining the revocation of his appointment, our Saint went to Paris, where he remained teaching and attending to the affairs of the Order until the year 1269, when he celebrated the General Chapter at Assisi. Returning again to Paris he devoted himself to his writings, lectures, sermons and ministerial duties, until 1271, when at Viterbo he played a most important part in a very memorable event. On the death of Clement IV. (1268), the Cardinals were so hopelessly divided in their opinions that for nearly three years they were unable to agree in the choice of a successor. In the year just mentioned they were assembled at Viterbo. Six candidates were before them for election and there seemed but little chance

of arriving at any decision. Bonaventure's reputation was so great that the Cardinals sought his services, and, according to one chronicler,[1] empowered him to nominate himself or any other to the Papal See, promising at the same time to ratify his selection. He nominated Theobald of Piacenza, a most worthy man who was at that time Legate in Syria. The Cardinals acquiesced in his choice and the new Pope took the name of Gregory X. This incident must be regarded as quite authentic, for reference is made to it in the process of our Saint's canonization. That the Cardinals seriously authorized him to nominate himself is the only item concerning which a doubt may be raised. To some writers it seems too improbable on the face of it, and they refuse to admit it.

The election of Gregory exercised an unforeseen influence on Bonaventure's career. The new Pope arrived at Viterbo in 1272, and proceeded to Rome, where he was solemnly crowned in the year 1273. Full of admiration for our Saint and reposing the greatest confidence in his wisdom, he desired to avail himself of his counsel in the government of the Church. Accordingly he summoned him to Rome and confided to him the transaction of many important matters. Amongst these was the selection of Legates to undertake the reconciliation

[1] Bartholomew of Pisa, "Conformities," Lib. 1. Conform. 8. Pars. 2.

of the Greeks and Tartars to the Latin Church. However, his stay in Rome was not of long duration, for in the same year, 1273, he was back again in Paris attending to his ministerial duties and working for the fulfilment of a very important commission entrusted to him by the Pope.

CHAPTER XII.

MISCELLANEOUS ANECDOTES OF THE SAINT.

BEFORE we pass on to St. Bonaventure's elevation to the Cardinalate it will be worth while to gather under one heading such scattered memories of him as have been preserved, and which shed additional light on his life and character. These are associated chiefly with the French King St. Louis IX., and St. Thomas Aquinas. As the sainted Franciscan General lived almost thirty-two years at the University of Paris, it was but natural he should come into close relationship with the equally sainted King of France. King Louis died 25 August, 1270, and at the second chapter of Pisa, held in 1272, St. Bonaventure introduced into the Order the solemn annual celebration of the day of his death. Mindful of his old-time friendship, our Saint secured this favour from Gregory X, as the first act of grace on the occasion of his coronation.

The following incident reveals the unreserve

with which Louis IX. confided in his Franciscan friend. On the death of his eldest son, the French King, in spite of the great love he had ever borne him, was thoroughly resigned to what he recognized as the will of God. He told St. Bonaventure that since God had willed the heir apparent should die he himself would not, even if he could, have his son live. "Sire," our Saint made answer, "how can that be?" St. Louis replied, "I believe and I know that such was the will of God. Seeing that it is God's will, on no account ought I to will the contrary; rather ought I cheerfully to accept God's good pleasure and not prove disloyal to His supreme will." "How much I suffer," he continued, "you can scarcely credit. Yet though I feel this loss so keenly, I must force myself not to manifest it." As he said, so he did, as the whole nation was witness.

On another occasion the King told St. Bonaventure that someone had approached him saying, "The Lord our God has three crowns, one of gold, one of thorns and the other incorruptible—the crown of Eternal Life. Two of these He has bestowed on you. I earnestly recommend you, however, that after the example of Jesus Christ, you strive to acquire by your good works the crown of Eternal Life. What will the two crowns you have avail you, if you secure not the third?" "Now it seems to me," was the pious King's comment, "that he spoke with very much wisdom.

His words entered my very heart." This lesson, our Saint adds, he also impressed on his court.

St. Louis once sought St. Bonaventure's opinion on an abstruse philosophic-theological question. "May a man," queried the King, "choose rather to be annihilated than to remain in everlasting torments? or ought he to prefer eternal torture to non-existence?" "Sire," answered Bonaventure, "endless torments presuppose sin and God's undying wrath against sin; and as no one may choose to remain for ever at enmity with God, non-existence is to be preferred to endless suffering." "I hold with Brother Bonaventure," the pious King exclaimed. Then turning to his courtiers he continued, "I assure you I would far rather cease to exist; I would far rather suffer annihilation, than live for ever, even in this world, reigning even as I now reign, and yet withal remain in perpetual enmity with my God."

A further incident reveals a still more intimate interchange of ideas. The King once came to Bonaventure and said to him: "The Queen is greatly disturbed because she hears that our son Peter wishes to join the Franciscan Order. I said to her, 'Do not trouble and do not allow the affair to weigh on your mind. Besides, you may mention the matter so often that the youth may come by the desire of joining the Order. Personally I feel assured that the love Brother Bonaventure, their General, bears me will not allow him

to receive our son without my being forewarned.' Did I not speak the truth, Brother Bonaventure?" To this our Saint made answer, "Sire, if your son comes to me on this matter, I shall refer to you and lay the responsibility on your shoulders". "No, Brother Bonaventure," replied King Louis, "that would not do. I should not like to have it on my conscience that I stood in the way of my son's following the voice of God." "Pious and holy King!" the narrative concludes, "his soul was so holy and so given to God, he preferred to be deprived of his son's society rather than withdraw that son from the service of God."

In the fourteenth century MSS. from which the previous incidents are drawn, and which are preserved in the Vatican Library, the following episode is found. We insert it, though historically it is not beyond question. The brother of St. Bonaventure once besought our Saint to use his influence with St. Louis on his behalf. "Do you wish me to speak to the King for you?" asked our Saint. "How could I exhort and induce others to the contempt of the world and the embracing of the Religious Life, if I interested myself on your worldly behalf: if, by procuring you what you desire, I afforded you the occasion of remaining in the lay state and of loving the world?"

In the course of this biography we have alluded casually to the intimate friendship which existed between St. Bonaventure and St. Thomas Aquinas.

There is an account of a holy rivalry of modest courtesy which took place between them when they were both to receive the degree of Doctor at the Paris University. St. Thomas could not be brought to take precedence of our Saint: whilst Bonaventure, true to the name of Friar Minor, shrank from the thought of anticipating St. Thomas. What they were unable to arrange between themselves was settled for them by their friends. It was thus finally determined that Bonaventure, as being somewhat older, should be the first to occupy the place of honour. When our Saint had been adorned with the insignia of his new degree, he was conducted to his place amongst the Masters of Divinity, whence he witnessed St. Thomas passing triumphantly through the ordeal from which he himself had just emerged with credit.

On a subsequent occasion, however, it was St. Thomas' turn to be worsted in a similar contest of holy humility. There is a tradition to the effect that when Pope Urban IV. was contemplating to extend to the whole Church the Feast of Corpus Christi he commissioned St. Thomas and St. Bonaventure to compose separately a suitable Office and Mass for the feast. While the work was being done, St. Bonaventure called upon his friend, and during the course of the conversation took up and read that antiphon for the *Magnificat* beginning with the words, *O Sacrum Convivium!*—"O Sacred Banquet!" So overcome was he by its depth and

sweetness that he returned home and cast into the fire the work he himself had been preparing. Whatever the authenticity of these two episodes, they certainly breathe the spirit of love and of courteous esteem with which these two Saints—representatives of two kindred Orders—were actuated towards each other.

This is another episode of the same holy friendship, which Wadding[1] recounts on the testimony of Mark of Lisbon. As St. Thomas Aquinas was once wondering at the varied learning and depth of insight displayed in his friend's writings, he asked St. Bonaventure to show him the books from which he had drawn. Thereupon the humble Franciscan General showed St. Thomas a Crucifix, and pointing to it exclaimed: "It is from this well-spring of light and love that I have drawn whatever is to be found in my lectures or writings".

The following incident in connexion with St. Antony of Padua gives us an insight into St. Bonaventure's unctuous devotion. When our Saint was in Italy in the year 1263, he presided over the translation of St. Antony's relics, which were then removed on 8 April from the humble Church where they had reposed since 1232 to the noble Basilica where they still remain. When the lid of the coffin was removed and all pressed eagerly forward to gaze, it was seen that though the flesh had long since returned to dust, and even the bones

[1] Tom. IV, Anno 1260. No. 20.

were fast crumbling away, the tongue, "which for 32 years had lain under the earth, was found as fresh and ruddy as though the Most Blessed Father had died that self-same hour".[1] With the tact and eloquence which were so peculiarly his own, Bonaventure turned this extraordinary happening to devout account. Reverently taking the relic into his hands and kissing it with tender devotion, he exclaimed, "O Blessed Tongue, which in life didst ever bless the Lord and lead others to bless Him, now doth it manifestly appear in what high honour thou wast held by God Himself". He then directed that it be preserved in a costly reliquary, as a special object of veneration, rather than remain with the rest of the body.

There is also recorded a quaint and interesting dialogue which took place between our Saint and Brother Giles. "On one occasion," we read[2] in the Life of Brother Giles commonly attributed to Brother Leo, "Brother Giles said to Friar Bonaventure, the Minister-General, 'Father, God has laden you with many graces. But we uneducated and unlearned men who have not received of this fulness, what shall we do to be saved?' The General made answer, 'Did God confer on man no other grace save only the power to love Him, that surely would suffice'. Then asked Brother Giles, 'Can an ignorant man love God even as can a scholar?'

[1] Cf. "Analecta Franciscana," Tom. III, pp. 328 and 157.
[2] Ibid. p. 101.

'A poor, little, aged peasant woman,' the General made answer, 'can love God even more than a Master in Theology.' Then arose Brother Giles in the fervour of his soul, and running towards that part of the garden nearest the highway, cried aloud, 'Poor little peasant woman love the Lord thy God, and foolish and ignorant as thou art, thou mayest be greater in His sight even than Friar Bonaventure'. And as he thus cried aloud he was rapt in ecstasy and remained immovable for the space of three hours."

There is one of our Saint's works which we must not omit to mention, for through it he is closely connected with an important present-day feature of the Church's life. Some authors tell us that it is to St. Bonaventure that we are indebted for our numerous modern confraternities; either, as some say, because he originated the idea of these pious societies, or, as others hold, because he prescribed for them a definite form of prayer. It is certain that our Saint founded the "Confraternity of the Holy Standard," and did so probably about the year 1264.[1] The root idea of a Confraternity, however, existed before the time of St. Bonaventure; these pious societies, in fact, seem but to be the counterpart of those local guilds which were early established over Europe. Then anent specific rules and prayers, etc., there are the religious prescrip-

[1] Bull of Pope Gregory XIII. "Pastoris Æterni," 23 October, 1576.

tions which Hincmar, Archbishop of Rheims, drew up for his guild, not to mention the Confraternity organized by Odo, Bishop of Paris, who died in 1208. This "Confraternity of the Standard," however, would seem to have been the first introduced into Rome; and its immediate and extensive adoption throughout Italy may possibly explain how it came to pass that upon St. Bonaventure was fathered an idea that, probably, was merely borrowed from Bishop Odo.

This "Confraternity of the Holy Standard" took its name from the banner which was borne at the head of the Society's processions and on which was wrought the likeness of the Blessed Virgin. It was also known as the "Society of the Protégés of Our Blessed Lady," for among their insignia was a representation of the mother of God shielding her clients with her mantle. At first the Society embraced only twelve members, all of noble birth, the number, it is said, shown to our Saint in a vision; soon, however, it grew into a large and public body. The distinctive dress of the association was a white habit, to the right shoulder of which was attached a blue badge on which a cross was traced in red and white. This was the period when the Crusades were kindling the West with religious enthusiasm, and it seemed appropriate that in spiritual as in temporal warfare, soldiers should bear on their person the insignia of the King under whose banner they were fighting.

The whiteness of the Cross recalled the purity of Our Lady; its deep red colour symbolized the love with which Our Lord purchased our redemption, and the heart-felt loyalty we should manifest in return. The aims of this Confraternity were prayer, fasting, and almsdeeds: the promotion of peace and harmony among citizens — then so fiercely given to feuds of civic politics; the procuring of dowries for destitute girls; voluntary service to hospitals; and, perhaps, chiefly, the ransom of captives from the tyranny of the Saracens.

CHAPTER XIII.

THE CARDINALATE.

Soon after his election to the Papacy, Gregory X. decided to hold a General Council at Lyons. He directed Bonaventure to undertake the preparation of the various matters to be discussed. Amongst all those who might co-operate for the success of the Council, the Pope perceived that there was no one more capable than our Saint. His authority was great and his influence was widespread. In the preceding chapter we have dwelt upon his familiar friendship with King Louis of France. With Charles I. of Anjou he was likewise on intimate terms. After his elevation to the Cardinalate this prince gave orders for his suitable conveyance to the Papal Court. Another somewhat curious

instance of Bonaventure's widespread influence is seen in a letter written to him by the Secretary of Otto Carus, King of Bohemia. He asks our Saint to intercede for him with his royal master so that he might receive from him some office which he coveted. As General of the Franciscan Order his power was very considerable, but it was greatly increased by his reputation for learning and profound piety. The Order had already spread into almost every country of the Old World. In the East and West it possessed thirty-three Provinces and four Vicariates. It had penetrated into Egypt, Palestine, and Syria; and was firmly established all over Europe including the British Isles.

The supreme ruler of so vast and powerful an organization is necessarily a noteworthy personage in the life of the Church. And it is not to be wondered at that Gregory X. fixed his eyes upon Bonaventure, and with a view to enhancing his authority and extending his sphere of action determined to raise him to the cardinalate. Accordingly, on 23 June, 1273, he made him Bishop of Albano and Cardinal of the Roman Church. Bonaventure's secretary, Bernard of Besse, viewing the procedure from the standpoint of the humble Friar and with apparently little approval, refers briefly to the fact in these words: "The aforesaid Lord Gregory X. *forced* him to become a Cardinal". We can imagine how strenuously Bonaventure refused the honour, but the Pope was inflexible and even peremptory.

He commanded Bonaventure to submit to his appointment and in a spirit of humility to place no obstacle in the way. He furthermore ordered him to repair to the Papal Court without any unreasonable delay or hesitation. Our Saint received the Brief at Paris and he set out at once for Florence where the Pope happened to be residing. Having reached the vicinity of the town he took up his abode in a small convent of the Order. Thither came the Pope's envoys with the Cardinal's insignia. As has already been said they found the Bishop and Cardinal-elect washing the plates of the monastery, and tradition has it that he ordered them to hang the hat on a branch of a tree close by until he had finished.

After a brief stay at Florence, at the Pope's command our Saint set out for Lyons, where the General Council was to be held. The assembly began its sessions in May, 1274. The importance of the part which Bonaventure played in this Council is admitted by all. His secretary and biographer, Bernard of Besse, says: "By command of our Lord the Pope he conducted the principal affairs of the Council". Pope Sixtus IV. affirms that Bonaventure "presided at the Council of Lyons and directed everything to the praise and glory of God; so that having suppressed discords and overcome difficulties, he was a source of honour and utility to the Church". It is, however, hardly credible that Bonaventure really *presided* over the Council, for

the Pope himself was present. Most likely he presided over the private sessions and prepared and directed the business to be publicly transacted.

The union of the Greek Church with the Latin, the deliverance of the Holy Land from Mohammedan rule, and the restoration of ecclesiastical discipline were the chief matters discussed by the Council.

In the work of reuniting the Greek and Latin Churches the Friars Minor played a very conspicuous part. Through them the negotiations with the Emperor Paleologus, and the Greek Church had been carried on. Their efforts seemed for a time to be crowned with complete success. The Emperor sent civil and ecclesiastical representatives to the Council of Lyons to express the adherence of himself and the entire Greek Church to all the tenets of the Church of Rome. In presence of the assembled Council and amid great solemnity the envoys made a public profession of Faith, and the great Eastern schism seemed to be healed. Unfortunately the result was of very brief duration. In the course of a few years the Greeks had once more returned to their old condition of schism and heresy. Still, even for this temporary success great credit is due to Bonaventure, for to his personal influence it must in no small degree be attributed. His learning, his eloquence, his affability and his piety deeply impressed the Greeks. They marked their appreciation of his great ability by bestowing on him

the name of "Eutychius". He surpassed the high opinion which Pope Gregory had formed of him. His extraordinary gifts filled the whole Council with admiration. The facility and precision of his diction, the prudence and moderation of his counsel, the breadth and depth of his learning, his skill in controversy and his wonderful power of dispatching most weighty matters made him the most prominent figure in the whole of the assembly. At the same time, his humility and meekness and the cheerful sweetness of his disposition won all hearts. His words were listened to with sympathetic attention and never failed to produce the desired effect. It is recorded that he preached twice during the Council: first when it was officially announced that the Greeks were sending representatives to Lyons, and, secondly, when the reunion had been accomplished. A large number of his sermons are extant, but amongst them is not found either of these discourses.

Whilst our gaze is fixed on Bonaventure as the central figure in that grand assembly of the Christian Church we can read with interest the pen-portrait of him left to us by an old chronicler. This writer,[1] after insisting at much length on the spiritual endowments of the Saint, continues thus:—

"Such beauty of soul was matched by exterior

[1] Peter Rodulph, fol. 92. Cf. Wadding, Tom. IV, Anno 1274. No. 20.

comeliness; of imposing appearance, tall in stature, and with a certain nobility of bearing. His features were handsome and of serious expression. His words were calm and his conversation kind and gentle. He rarely suffered from ill health. His disposition was more than admirable. His appearance cannot be described other than like that of an angel sent from Heaven, for in his day there was no one more beautiful, holier, or more wise. Such affability and grace shone forth in his countenance that he was to all not only an object of love but of admiration. Those who once beheld him felt themselves drawn instinctively to admire and venerate him as one especially designed to further the interests of religion."

The description is evidently that of an ardent admirer of Bonaventure, but making all due allowance for its palpable exaggerations we are justified in believing that the personal appearance of the Saint must have been impressive and attractive in no ordinary degree. This seems to have been a characteristic of many of the saints, although their biographers, imbued with the peculiar ascetical notion that unsightliness of body is somehow necessarily associated with beauty and excellence of soul, usually discard all reference to bodily endowments.

In his labours at the Council our Saint was ably seconded by two other Franciscans—Rigaldi, Archbishop of Rouen, and Paul, Bishop of Tripolis. Their prominence and the authority they wielded

seem to have excited a certain amount of jealousy among their contemporaries. Thus we find them referred to in the following satirical triplet :—

> Bonaventure, Rouen and Tripolitane
> Dispense papal laws and unmindful remain
> Of their Order which scorns all honours as vain.

This suggests the question : "How can we reconcile the acceptance of ecclesiastical dignities with the Spirit of St. Francis and the profession of his Rule?" Many answers might be given, but I believe the following to be the most satisfactory. The leading principle of the Franciscan Rule is obedience to the Pope, the supreme authority in all things spiritual. Hence, submission to what he commands cannot be a violation of the Franciscan spirit. Like every other religious development of human origin the Order of St. Francis is entirely subject to the authority of the Head of the Church. He can modify it in its constitution and in its members as circumstances may demand. Non-Catholic writers, and even Catholics, sometimes lose sight of this. They seem to think that the Rule of Francis possesses some species of supreme and absolute authority which no power on earth can, or ought to, interfere with. This assumption is utterly false. None would have more emphatically rejected it than St. Francis himself. Hence, when the Vicar of Christ, for the welfare of the Church, calls upon a child of St. Francis to accept some office to

which attaches dignity or honour he may humbly refuse, but a persistent and obstinate refusal would find no justification in the profession he has made.

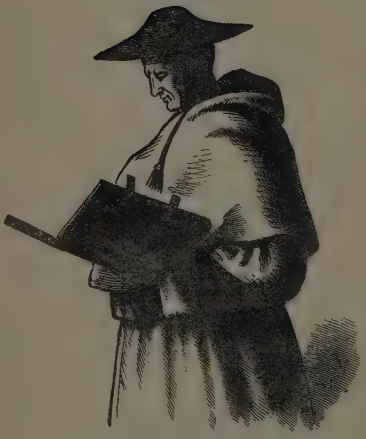
CHAPTER XIV.

DEATH.

By special Pontifical dispensation Bonaventure retained the office of Minister-General for a short time after his elevation to the Cardinalate. His successor could be elected only by a General Chapter, and this could not conveniently be convoked until the feast of Pentecost. This occurred on 20 May, 1274, and the place chosen for the assembly was Lyons. The Saint presided, and having formally resigned his office, Jerome of Ascoli, afterwards Pope Nicholas IV., was appointed his successor. With this event Bonaventure's official connection with the Order of St. Francis ceased. As we shall see, it was almost coincident with his death.

The Council of Lyons was still sitting when Bonaventure was called to his reward. He was only fifty-three years of age, but the immense labours he had undergone and the habitual weakness of his constitution, hastened the end.

On 6 July, the fourth general session of the Council was held. The reunion of the Greek and Latin Churches was solemnly ratified. Bonaventure



St. Bonaventure.

From Raphael's Disputa, in the Vatican.

preached on the occasion. He took for his text the words of the prophet Baruch (v. 5). "Arise, O Jerusalem, and stand on high; and look about towards the East, and behold thy children gathered together from the rising to the setting sun, by the word of the Holy One rejoicing in the remembrance of God". The body of the discourse has not come down to us, but we can well imagine that it was well worthy of the great occasion and of the genius and sanctity of the preacher. It was his last public utterance—the *Nunc dimittis* of the Church's zealous champion as he witnessed the accomplishment of the object for which he had long so earnestly striven. He was even then standing on the brink of the grave. The echoes of eternity were already beginning to sound in his ears and the everlasting years to unfold themselves before his gaze. As he heard the solemn strains of the grand *Te Deum* that marked the close of the great event he must have felt that his work for God and for the Church was accomplished. Weakened by disease and worn out by the constant strain and pressure of business, his strength was rapidly failing. The ceaseless activity of his great mind, his restless energy and burning zeal, had hitherto rendered him insensible to the body's decline, but at last the limits of endurance were reached and the end was at hand. Bonaventure returned home from the Council, and nine days later he was dead.

The exact cause of his death is not known. One

writer[1] refers to an extraordinary mortality prevailing amongst the members of the Council. It is just possible that some species of epidemic, so frequent in those days, may have broken out in the city, and that our Saint in his infirm state of health fell an easy victim to it. Incidentally, we learn that one of the symptoms of his last illness was a complete inability to retain even the least particle of food. This is recorded[2] in connection with the following truly marvellous occurrence. On his death-bed our Saint longed with all the ardour of his seraphic soul for the sweet intercourse of Sacramental Communion. But the cause just mentioned made this impossible. Still, as far as possible to appease his pious longing, the Consecrated Host was brought into his room and placed beside him, so that his eyes might rest upon it. This only intensified his desire, until it would appear that the Lord could no longer withstand the ardour of his pleadings. A wonderful thing was then seen to happen. Without any visible agency the Sacred Host left the ciborium and, moving through the air towards the dying Saint, vanished within his breast!

At an earlier period in his life a somewhat similar occurrence is recorded. Bartholomew of Pisa and the author[3] of the Chronicles of the Twenty-four Generals relate that, on a certain occasion, the pious

[1] Cf. "Opera Omnia," Tom. X, p. 67. No. 4.
[2] Wadding, "Annals," Tom. IV, Anno 1274. No. 18.
[3] Cf. "Analecta Franciscana," Tom. III, p. 334.

General, thinking himself unworthy, abstained for a long time from saying Holy Mass. But the Lord was touched by his humility, and one day as he was devoutly hearing Mass, a particle of the Consecrated Host, solely at the command of the Saviour, left the altar and entered his mouth, filling his soul with divine sweetness. It may be that both records are but different versions of the same fact, and we may doubt which of them is authentic. But if Bonaventure's malady were such as described, we should like to think that the Lord, pitying the loneliness and extremity of His dying servant, afforded him, even by a miracle, the supreme consolation which his passing spirit sighed for.

Another incident which touchingly illustrates the absolute poverty in which the Saint died is recorded by Wadding. Although Bishop and Cardinal, his sole possession on his death-bed was his breviary. Everything else he had distributed to the poor, and even the breviary he regarded not as his own but as belonging to his Order, and he directed that it should be restored to the Brethren after his death.

We would fain linger by the deathbed of the Saint but the almost complete absence of details gives us no encouragement to do so. We are not told even where he died. Was it in the convent of his Order and surrounded by his Brethren, or elsewhere? How did he bear himself in that final struggle? What were his sentiments? What were

his last words? None of these things are recorded. Apart from general observations concerning his virtues and his holiness we only know with certainty that during the night of 14 July, 1274, Bonaventure passed to his reward.

We may well imagine that death has no terror for the Saints; at the same time, we cannot say that it has any special attraction for them. Even our Holy Father, St. Francis, whilst unawed at the approach of "Sister Death," seemed yet submissively to cling to life. It is a natural and a legitimate instinct. Life is the sum total of our temporal gifts, and its preservation is a duty we owe to the giver. It is true, granted the immortality of the soul, and future reward, that there is a greater good than the body's life and that to secure it we may, and in some cases ought, to forfeit the latter. But these circumstances are abnormal and rarely occur. In the ordinary course of events the soul's welfare does not demand the body's death. The interests of body and soul run on parallel lines, and so long as right order is maintained they cannot collide. We read indeed that the Saints, vividly realizing the happiness of Heaven and aspiring to it with steadfast confidence, longed for death. St. Paul exclaiming: "I wish to be dissolved and to be with Christ," is quoted as an example of this. But the attitude thus expressed by the Apostle is not incompatible with a natural repugnance to, and shrinking from death. We believe this to be in

some degree the characteristic of all men, saints as well as sinners.

Bonaventure's death was regarded somewhat in the light of a public calamity. The effect it produced upon the Council of Lyons is narrated as follows.[1] "At this time, whilst the Council was still sitting, the most reverend Father in Christ, the Lord Cardinal Bonaventure of most venerable memory was laid with the holy Fathers, filling, as we may believe, the Church Triumphant with joy at his advent, but affecting the Church Militant with incredible grief at his departure. For Greeks and Latins, clergy and laity, followed his bier with bitter tears, lamenting the grievous loss of so great a personage."

In accordance with the custom of the time and country, Bonaventure was buried on the day of his death. His funeral was attended by the Pope and all the Prelates of the Council. Peter, Cardinal Bishop of Ostia, celebrated Holy Mass and preached the funeral oration. He took for his text the pathetic words in which David laments the death of Jonathan (2 Kings I. 26): "I grieve for thee, my brother Jonathan—exceedingly beautiful and amiable above the love of women". The text was suggested no doubt by that striking characteristic of the Saint upon which all his biographers so strongly insist—his wonderful amiability. As one

[1] Author of the "Chronicles of Twenty-four Generals." Cf. "Analecta Franciscana," Tom. III, p. 356.

writer[1] expresses it: "This grace the Lord had granted him that whosoever looked on him was forthwith irresistibly drawn to love him".

At the next session of the General Council the Pope referred to the grievous loss sustained by the entire Church in the death of Bonaventure. And to mark his sense of gratitude for the immense labours he had undergone on its behalf he ordered all the priests and prelates of the Catholic world to offer up Holy Mass for the repose of his soul.

The Saint was buried in the church of the Friars Minor at Lyons. In the year 1434, a new church dedicated to St. Francis was erected in the city, and thither, as to a more suitable resting-place, the body was translated. This took place one hundred and sixty years after the Saint's death. Marvellous to relate, the head was then found to be entirely incorrupt. The hair, lips, teeth, and tongue were perfectly preserved and retained their natural colour. The people of Lyons were profoundly affected by this miracle, and they chose Bonaventure for the patron of their city. The movement, already on foot, to obtain his canonization received thereby a new and powerful impetus.

On the occasion of this translation the body of St. Bonaventure was placed in a costly reliquary at the command of the Minister-General, and kept at the Franciscan Church at Lyons. Later in the

[1] The historian of the Council of Lyons. Cf. "Opera," Tom. X, p 67.

same century, the Minister-General, Father Francis Samson, removed the arms of our Saint from Lyons, and entrusted them to the keeping of the Religious at Bagnorea. In the Cathedral Church of this town these relics are still piously venerated. Around the reliquary which encloses them runs the inscription, "Father Francis Samson, General, bequeathed this reliquary to the Convent of St. Francis in Bagnorea, 1 May, 1491".

In 1494 King Charles VIII. of France erected a magnificent side-chapel for the remains at Lyons, and in return requested some relic of St. Bonaventure. His desire was granted, and the relic he obtained he finally presented to the chapel of Fontainebleau. Thence it was taken to the Franciscan Church at Paris, where it remained till the French Revolution. Other relics of St. Bonaventure were removed to Venice in 1494 where they are still exposed to the veneration of the Faithful.

The shrine at Lyons was enriched with many valuable offerings—tributes of gratitude to the efficacy of our Saint's intercession. There, in one urn plated with silver, his body was preserved; the head being reserved in another equally costly. There, too, the remains rested in veneration till the second half of the sixteenth century.

In 1562, Lyons fell into the hands of the Huguenots who made an assault on the Franciscan Church there and rifled St. Bonaventure's shrine of its treasures. Owing, however, to the foresight and

heroism of Father James Gayete, the Superior, their sacrilegious purpose was, in part, thwarted. This holy man had betimes taken the precaution of enclosing our Saint's relics in two urns and burying them in a secret place. The two Religious who shared his secret were sent to another convent lest what they knew be wrung from them by torture. Father James was subjected to much harsh treatment, but all to no avail. A search was then instituted through the friary and its grounds, and finally the Huguenots succeeded in discovering the body. This was borne to the public square and burned with many images, pictures, and objects of devotion.

When peace again prevailed, the Religious who knew of the secret returned to Lyons and produced the urn which contained the head of our Saint as also the crucifix and chalice he was wont to use. The former cultus was once more revived; the friary and church rose from their ruins and the shrine of St. Bonaventure regained its old-time splendour. During the French Revolution, however, the profanation was more complete. The friary and church were razed to the ground, and once again the urn containing the head of our Saint was buried for safety in a secret place. This time, however, the holy Religious died without divulging his secret, and all subsequent searches to find the relics have proved unavailing.

Photo. Alinari.

ST. BONAVENTURE.

Church of St. Maria degli Angeli, Dintorni (Tiberio d Assisi)

CHAPTER XV.

CANONIZATION.

From all that has hitherto been said it is evident that Bonaventure was eminent amongst his contemporaries. He excelled in holiness and learning. His greatness was religious. The service of God, the sanctification of his soul and the welfare of the Church were the sole ends to which his life was devoted. He achieved them with remarkable success. His contemporaries perceived it and they regarded him as a saint. A saint is a man whose life is virtuous in a heroic degree—whose spiritual excellence is indisputable. Such excellence is worthy of recognition, and the Catholic Church, with its true appreciation of what is right, has adopted suitable means of expressing it. These are embodied in the process of canonization. In the early ages of the Church there was no special form of canonization. It appears to have consisted in the unanimous belief of the Faithful—at first merely tolerated, but in time positively approved of by ecclesiastical authority. In the eighth century we come across the liturgical ceremony of solemnly enrolling the Saint amongst the number of the Blessed in Heaven.

This is not the place to discuss the dogmatic significance of such procedure. Suffice it to say,

it would be rash to imagine that the Church could err in so important and truly religious a matter.

Although the holiness of the Saints was recognized by their contemporaries, and continued to be the object of devout veneration by succeeding generations, still the Church's authentic recognition of it has sometimes been postponed for long centuries. The Church moves slowly in such matters. She is guided by the attitude of the Faithful. If these, through successive generations, maintain a traditional cultus of the Servant of God and eventually demand his canonization, the process is usually entered upon. The utmost caution is observed in the procedure. A most careful study is made of the life of the individual. The heroic nature of his virtues, the constant devotion of the Faithful towards him, the miracles attributed to him must be judicially proven. All evidence is carefully sifted by expert canonists. Every fact calculated to benefit or to prejudice the cause of the Saint is skilfully adduced. All human means likely to ensure the truth of the Church's judgment are employed.

In the Middle Ages, even as at the present day, it was the custom to demand from the Supreme Pontiff the favour of canonization. The cause had to be put forward, and the Church's definitive sentence formally solicited. In the case of our Saint the petition was presented by the Minister-General of the Franciscan Order, Fr. Francis Samson. It was

supported by the following powerful monarchs and nobles: the Emperor Frederick III., King Louis of France, Ferdinand King of Sicily, Matthias King of Hungary; the Dukes of Calabria, Venice, Milan, and Bourbon; also the Municipalities of Florence, Siena, Lyons, Perugia and Balneumregis.

It is somewhat strange to observe that this petition was not presented earlier. It was now some one hundred and eighty years since Bonaventure's death. But, as the Pontiff declared, the delay only added to the glory of the event. It is a prerogative of the greatness of the Saints that it appeals so powerfully to the minds of men long after their death. Herein it contrasts strikingly with worldly greatness which vanishes so quickly as scarcely to survive the death of those who possessed it.

When our Saint's canonization was mooted Sixtus IV. occupied the Papal Chair. He had been a Franciscan, and this circumstance operated in favour of the undertaking. To the Pontiff the enrolment of a brother Friar in the Calendar of the Saints was peculiarly agreeable. He refers to the fact in the Bull of canonization, and he is careful at the same time to guard against the impression that his judgment might be influenced by undue partiality. "We have read most diligently," he writes, "the divine writings of the aforesaid holy man, and from the time we were capable of understanding them they have been our chief delight. From the older and more trustworthy Brethren of the Order, who in

their youth had learnt it from their elders, we have heard of the fame of his sanctity and miracles, and we felt that whilst he triumphed in Heaven he ought to be venerated on earth. Moreover, we remembered that, by choice, we had embraced the same Order and therein by the Divine assistance made some progress in learning and in the spiritual life—that we had fulfilled the same ministerial office and had been raised to the dignity of the Cardinalate and finally to the summit of the Pontificate. So that we feel we have been raised to those eminences in the Church Militant through which Bonaventure attained to the glory of the Church Triumphant. But lest we should appear to be influenced by any personal motive in this process we have been careful to employ all the diligence and caution which the importance of the matter demands."

He points out the measures taken to accomplish this. A Commission of Cardinals was appointed to examine the life and miracles of the Saint. Their report in the first instance did not satisfy the Pope. It was not drawn up with sufficient solemnity and it had to be repeated. A fuller investigation was made, additional witnesses were examined and new miracles investigated. The result this time was satisfactory, and the Pontiff felt himself bound to proceed with the canonization. "Lest," he says, "we should appear to resist the Holy Ghost, who through the mouth of His Prophet commands us to praise God in His Saints, we have taken counsel

with our venerable Brethren the Cardinals concerning this canonization and they have approved of it unanimously." A public Consistory was then held and the Pope enjoined upon the clergy and Faithful of Rome the observance of three days prayer and fasting—"so that God might enlighten us as to the correct course to pursue, and preserve His Church from falling into error". After this the opinion of the Cardinals was sought once more—it was entirely favourable.

Thus assured, the Pope proceeded to the canonization. The solemn act took place in the Basilica of the Holy Apostles on 14 April, 1482. In the course of the ceremony a very remarkable oration on the Saint was delivered by the great ecclesiastical orator, Octavianus de Martinis.[1] He insisted particularly on the miracles attributed to the Saint, of which he enumerated something like twenty-one different species. In the following singularly eloquent passage he summarizes the Saint's claims to canonization:—

"If, therefore, it appear that the Blessed Bonaventure was miraculous in his works; if his Divine Commentaries show that he possessed the gift of infused knowledge; if the assiduous fulfilment of the humblest offices prove that he despised worldly honours, and shook off all earthly affections; if it appear that he was patient in trials, steadfast in persecution, that he was profitable to the Order of

[1] Cf. Wadding, "Annals," Tom. XIV, Anno 1482. No 3.

St. Francis and that, like St. Paul, he was miraculously called to the service of religion; if it appear that his future sanctity was foretold by St. Francis and affirmed by Alexander of Hales, the Irrefragable Doctor; if it appear that the Sons of St. Francis, themselves remarkable for holiness but considering him holier still, made him their chief Superior, and that the Holy See on account of his renowned merits called him to the administration of the Universal Church; if, finally, it appear that by the common consent of the Faithful he is regarded, invoked and worshipped as a Saint and that he daily succours those who have recourse to him, then your Holiness without further request might decree him those public honours which alone he lacks. How much more readily ought you not to do this at the earnest prayer of so many powerful princes."

At the conclusion of this discourse Peter Rodulph, the Procurator-General of the Franciscan Order, arose, and addressing the Sovereign Pontiff, formally besought[1] him in the name of the Most Holy Trinity to enrol Bonaventure in the Calendar of the Saints. The Pope's reply is embodied in the Bull already mentioned, from which we quote the following important passage :—

"Confident that God will not allow us to fall into error in the canonization of this Saint, by His Divine Authority and that of His Holy Apostles Peter and Paul, we decree that Bonaventure of

[1] Cf. Wadding, "Annals," Tom. XIV, Anno 1482. No. 4.

Balneumregis, of blessed memory, Professor of Theology, of the Order of Friars Minor, who was raised from the office of Minister-General to that of Bishop and Cardinal, is a Saint, and is to be inscribed in the Catalogue of the Saints and joined and associated with them. By these letters present we insert him amongst the number of those who are to be venerated by the Church."

Thus was Bonaventure glorified. But further honours were in store for him. A hundred years later 14 March, 1582, he was declared a Doctor of the Universal Church by Sixtus V. This was an authoritative pronouncement that our Saint was to be regarded as one of the foremost expounders of the Catholic Faith. He was placed on a level with Ambrose, Jerome, Augustine, and Gregory. These are the words of the Pontiff: [1] "After mature deliberation with our venerable Brothers the Cardinals, with their counsel and unanimous consent, and by our own certain knowledge . . . we inscribe by right the aforesaid St. Bonaventure amongst the number of Holy Doctors, and we declare and decree that he is to be regarded and venerated as amongst the chief and foremost of those who have excelled in the Sacred Science of Theology."

After more than seven hundred years Bonaventure's greatness is undiminished and his glory is undimmed. His memory is fragrant in the Church of God, and those "Divine Commentaries"

[1] Bull "Triumphantis Jerusalem".

and other treasures of Christian thought which he left behind him are still with us. In the depth and clearness of his dogmatic teaching, but especially in the ardent outpourings of his seraphic soul in his devotional works, we are brought into intimate contact with his marvellous life. From these, rather than from the records of biographers, we learn its true beauty and holiness. The latter offer us a portrait of the exterior man, but the former reveal to us the secret workings of the soul. From his writings we gather what Bonaventure really was —what he thought, what he aspired to, what he sought to accomplish. It is in them we may hope to discover the real man, and to obtain a clearer grasp of that particular development of the Franciscan spirit with which he is so intimately associated.

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